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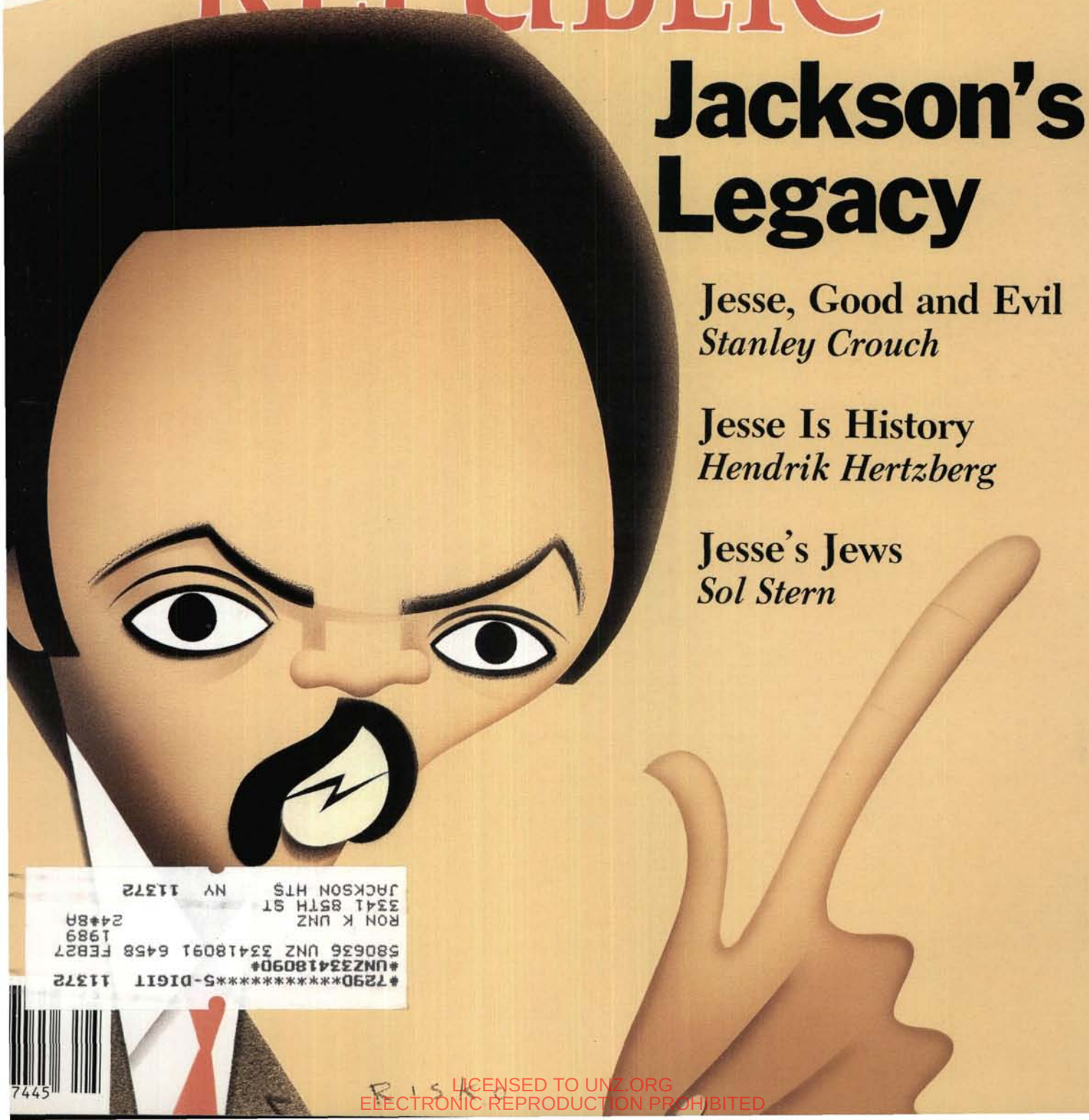
Speaker Wright, Albatross—*The Editors*

RICHARD GILMAN ON JOHN UPDIKE • LEON WIESELTIER: WEST BANK STORY

RED BARNES IN MOSCOW: MY WEEK UNDER COMMUNISM

THE NEW REPUBLIC



Jackson's Legacy

Jesse, Good and Evil
Stanley Crouch

Jesse Is History
Hendrik Hertzberg

Jesse's Jews
Sol Stern

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CORRESPONDENCE

WAR POWERS ACTION

To the editors:

In "Whose War Is It, Anyway?" (May 23), John Hart Ely contends that "no one in Congress seems to care" about President Reagan's continuing failure to comply with the War Powers Act in the Persian Gulf. He recommends that Congress pass a law triggering the War Powers Act itself and then authorize the president to continue his military activities in the Gulf indefinitely. Ely overlooks what has occurred in the House and Senate over the last ten months. The two bodies have taken different courses of action.

We in the House have chosen the courts. A total of 110 members of the House filed a lawsuit (*Lowry* v. *Reagan*) asking the courts to require the president to comply with the War Powers law. This is the largest number of members of Congress ever to sign onto one lawsuit. Currently the suit is on appeal in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. The Senate tried to pass legislation triggering the act. They "screamed" (as Ely urges), they debated, they tried to legislate—but were predictably defeated by a Republican filibuster. Moreover, had the Senate been able to overcome the filibuster, the measure would have been vetoed by the president. Some senators have now concluded that they failed because the War Powers Act, not their own rules, is defective, and they are advocating that the act be revised (i.e., watered down) so that it will be easier for the president to accept.

It would be double capitulation for Congress to trigger the act and then authorize the president to continue indefinitely doing whatever he wishes in the Gulf. Congress would be capitulating first because the War Powers Act places on the president the total responsibility for triggering its provisions. It would also be a capitulation from a policy point of view because the purpose of the act was to take the decision of war and peace out of the hands of a single individual (the president) and ensure a *collaborative* decision between the president and Congress.

MIKE LOWRY
Chairman, Democratic Study Group
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

LIBERAL BEGAT CONSERVATIVE

To the editors:

Andrew Sullivan, in his article on America's divinity schools ("Oh My God," May 2), states that the Jewish Theological Seminary "was founded in 1887 as a center of Conservative Judaism, a movement created to compensate for the attrition of orthodoxy." In fact, Conservative Judaism was founded in America by those members of the most liberal movement, Reform Judaism, who thought that the Reform movement had gone too far "left" in the dropping of observances and customs. Conservative Judaism was conceived and perceived as a return to greater religiosity.

The development of the Conservative movement in the U.S. as Sullivan describes it would be implausible. There were but some 250,000 Jews in America 100 years ago. The vast majority were of German background and, if affiliated at all, were part of the Reform movement, itself then barely a generation old. Immigration of the Orthodox from Eastern Europe had barely begun. In a few years a handful of impoverished, culture-shocked immigrants hardly had the time to undergo the process of theological dissatisfaction inherent to the beginnings of a new religious movement. Thus the statement regarding JTS, "Now it has to cope with born-again refugees from liberal Reform Judaism," is misleading. This was actually the original mission of that seminary, once again being rediscovered.

WILLIAM L. FRIEDMAN
Los Angeles, California

MEESE CATCHES HELLER

To the editors:

TRB's discussion of Attorney General Ed Meese's creative interpretations of the technicalities inherent in the worn phrase "innocent before proven guilty" ("Soft on Crime," April 11) cited Meese's statement, "You don't have many suspects who are innocent. That's contradictory. If a person is innocent of a crime, then he is not a suspect." There was a feeling of déjà vu about this seemingly original judicial revisionism. Then lo and behold! Meese has been fooling us all along, couching his appreciation for contemporary literature in vague rhetoric:

> Clevinger was guilty, of course, or he would not have been accused, and since the only way to prove it was to find him guilty, it was [the judicial action board's] patriotic duty to do so. —*Catch 22*

Had I known that Meese was a fan of Joseph Heller, I would have been less likely to judge him a dangerous man with no respect for the somber provisions of the statesmen who founded our judicial system.

NICK BANDOUVERIS
New York, New York

THE BUSINESS OF COLLEGES

To the editors:

Joseph Nocera's dig (Northampton Diarist, "Beyond Therapy," May 2) at Mount Holyoke could be dismissed as wrong-headed and superficial were it not part of a general TNR policy to denigrate academe while aping its style(s) and arrogating to itself academic authority. It is a problem that colleges are so expensive, but laying sole blame on the institutions shows little understanding of the peculiar economics of higher education. In the '70s most colleges had to dip into their endowments to fund daily expenses. In the '80s, therefore, presidents and provosts have had to restore their endowments and to shore up their colleges' neglected physical plants. That mundane need for money led to, among other things, investment in real estate. What looks frivolous to a journalist would make sense to a businessman. Furthermore, alumni like splashy outlays. New stables and gyms are usually the bequests of the wealthy, not the whimsical follies of administrators.

Education Secretary William Bennett complains that colleges do not behave like businesses and Nocera complains that they do. Unlike American businesses, however, colleges have had to retool in the face of vastly diminished government support. And they have not been able to lower expenses by shifting their plants overseas or to hustle capital from the Japanese. Higher education is in a predicament that mandates responsible reporting, not resentful sniping.

DAVID KAUFMANN
New Haven, Connecticut
continued on page 42

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUE 3,831

WASHINGTON, D.C. — JUNE 20, 1988

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2 **CORRESPONDENCE** ..... War Powers action, Meese and Joseph Heller, &c.

5 **THE EDITORS** ..... ALBATROSS
What should the Democrats do about Jim Wright?
NOTEBOOK

6 **CHARLES PAUL FREUND** ..... THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST
From summit fever to Lyme disease.

8 **FRED BARNES** ..... WHITE HOUSE WATCH: IN THE EVIL EMPIRE
Reagan visits the heart of darkness.

9 **BRUCE FEIRSTEIN** ..... LITTLE CAESAR SALAD
The Mob meets the yuppies.

10 **RICHARD LOURIE** ..... POSTCARD GORI: SAINT JOE
Glasnost hasn't made it to Stalin's hometown.

11 **MORTON M. KONDRACKE** ..... DETENTE INC.
Washington and Wall Street gear up for good Soviet-American relations.

13 **ROBERT KUTTNER** ..... THE FIRE WALL
Now is not the time to repeal the safeguards of the 1933 Glass-Steagall Banking Act.

15 **HENDRIK HERTZBERG** ..... JESSE IS HISTORY
In both senses.

18 **SOL STERN** ..... JESSE'S JEWS
Yes, there are some.

20 **STANLEY CROUCH** ..... BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL
Despite flawed character and methods, Jackson speaks honestly for blacks, courageously for the disfranchised, and powerfully for Americans as a whole. He's too good to waste.

24 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ..... ON FILMS: ADVENTURERS ALL
Willow, another Lucas mistake; *Rikky and Pete* is perky.

25 **EDWARD ROTHSTEIN** ..... ON MUSIC: THE DADA OF US ALL
The unconventional career of Virgil Thomson.

29 **LEON WIESELTIER** ..... THE POLITICS OF PATHOS
The Yellow Wind by David Grossman

34 **GARY MITCHNER** ..... POEM *Louise and Louis, 1932*

35 **JAROSLAW ANDERS** ..... THE TRANSFORMING SELF
Diary: Volume One by Witold Gombrowicz

39 **RICHARD GILMAN** ..... THE WITCHES OF UPDIKE
S. by John Updike

42 **JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH** ..... HOW BUSINESSES BEHAVE
Inside the Firm by Harvey Leibenstein

43 **WASHINGTON DIARIST** ..... MURDER IN THE COURT

COVER by Robert Risko for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Articles on pages 15, 18, and 20. TRB From Washington will return next week.

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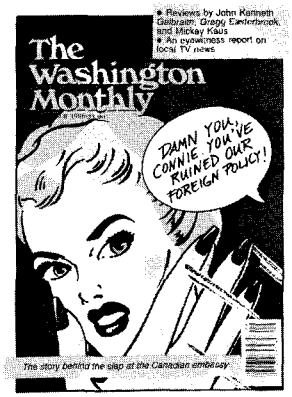
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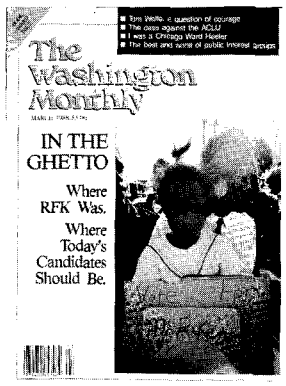
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The case against the ACLU
I was a Chicago Ward Heeler
The best and worst of public interest groups
The Washington Monthly
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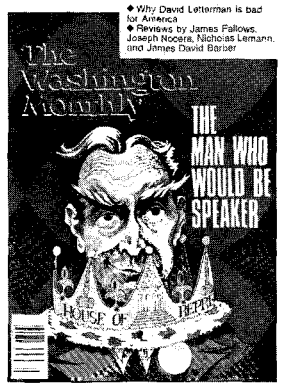
—The Boston Globe


Why David Letterman is bad for America
Reviews by James Fallows, Joseph Nocera, Nicholas Lemann, and James David Barber
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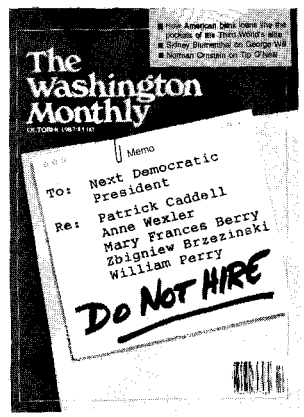

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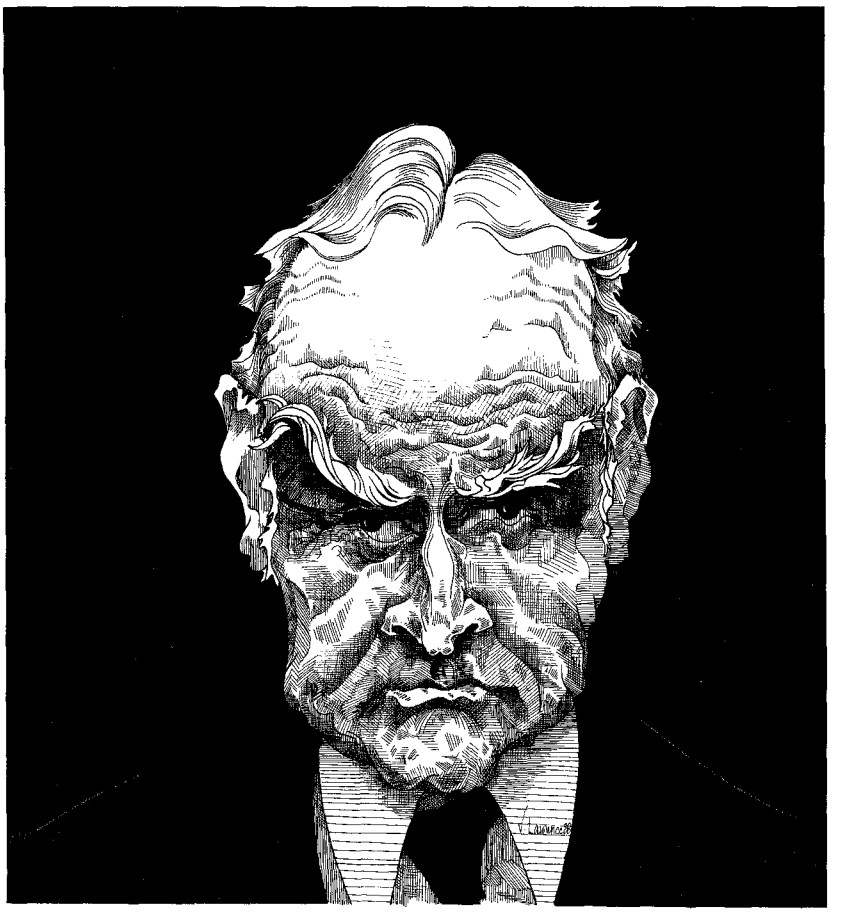
THE NEW REPUBLIC
JUNE 20, 1988

ALBATROSS

Even if Jim Wright's eyebrows didn't look as though they're attached to his forehead with Velcro, there would be reasons to doubt his authenticity. His drawl, for example, has more of a sugar coating than is natural in Texas. And he's a bit indiscriminate about which sentences he punctuates with those frozen smiles. Try as he might to come off as an avuncular, small-town Texan, he ends up looking like someone playing an avuncular, small-town Texan in a grade-B movie.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

No man should be condemned on the basis of his appearance, but Wright has provided other grounds for suspicion. Since coming to Washington 34 years ago, he's done a number of things that belong somewhere on the ethics spectrum between shady and criminal. Their exact location is a question worthy of exploration, and an inquiry appears to be on the way. Seventy-two House Republicans have asked the ethics committee to look into his conduct, and Wright, insisting it's all a plot, is promising to cooperate.

We wish him luck. And, more sincerely, we wish Michael Dukakis and other Democrats luck in escaping any fallout. Wright is scheduled to preside at the Democratic convention in July (a fact that didn't escape the Republicans who chose this moment in history to raise the ethics issue). And if he remains Speaker of the House, he would be the legislative point man in a Dukakis administration. Whether or not he's broken any laws, Wright is not someone farseeing Democrats should want to figure centrally in their party's future. One question that should be on their minds right now is whether this controversy is a good chance to nudge him offstage.

Wright's most recent appearance in the ethical twilight

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zone involves a sort of book, a collection of his anecdotes and speech excerpts called *Reflections of a Public Man*. Merely opening the "book" is enough to make you wonder how it came to exist; it is clearly no ordinary commercial venture. It was "published" by a man named Carlos Moore, a friend and longtime political supporter who owns a printing company. Moore ran a political fund for the Teamsters Union until 1975, when he was convicted of income tax evasion. He spent time in jail, despite a letter from Wright to the sentencing judge stressing "the obvious value to us all of Mr. Moore's continued presence in our communities."

Indeed. Wright's book sells for $5.95, and Moore lets him keep $3.25. That's a 55 percent royalty. Republican Representative Newt Gingrich of Georgia, who has adopted Wright's ruin as his mission in life, notes that authors typically get only 15 percent, but in fact the disparity is even greater: *paperback* royalties are usually 7½ percent.

The royalty arrangement is just one suspicious aspect of Wright's literary enterprise. Hundreds of thousands of dollars of his campaign funds have gone to Moore's printing company. This fact makes the unusually generous royalty look like a personal kickback to Wright for business from his campaign fund. Indeed, it begins to look like money laundering: dollars from Wright's campaign kitty go into his pockets via Moore.

One look at *Reflections of a Public Man* raises another question: Who on earth would buy it? The answer to this is also suspicious. Moore's company isn't a real publishing house and has no nationwide marketing or distribution network. Yet it has managed to unload more than 15,000 copies of Wright's tome. Moore says most of the books are sold at "political rallies." If you're wondering how someone no more charismatic than Jim Wright can inspire listeners to shell out six bucks for stale speech excerpts, the answer may be that he doesn't. The Teamsters Union bought 1,000 copies of the book, and another lobbyist bought 1,200. This

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	SUCH GOOD FRIENDS	1	2
2.	GORKY LARK	—	1
3.	JERSEY COWED	*	2
4.	THE DIE'S CAST	*	14
5.	WRIGHT OFF	—	1
6.	THE INNER TUBE	*	7
7.	POPPED GUNS	—	1
8.	LADIES OF THE CLUB	—	1
9.	WILLOW, THE WISP	—	1
10.	TICKED OFF	—	1

1. SUCH GOOD FRIENDS

Summit. It is curious to watch superpower summitry reduced, in the absence of an overriding agenda, to a battle of the p.r. bands. It beats the hell out of thermonuclear war, but there is something about these handshaking strolls, these efforts by the hand-holding First Ladies to stump one another, that smacks less of summitry than of suburban one-upsmanship.

2. GORKY LARK

Mirror imaging. Not since Walter Huston charmed Dana Andrews in *North Star* (1943) have Good Russians had such a soapbox in the U.S. media. This Family of Man angle used to be the right's nightmare. "Moral equivalence," conservatives called it, claiming it undercut the West's sense of its own rectitude. Now Moral Equivalency is a major Reagan legacy.

3. JERSEY COWED

Education. New Jersey's move to take over the Jersey City schools has been called the beginning of the end for locally controlled education. Maybe. Local control of anything is by now a nostalgic fiction anyway. Furthermore, education is a cultural sacred cow. After eight Reagan years the Department of Education is not only still there, it's more entrenched.

4. THE DIE'S CAST

Post-crash. The export explosion, the manufacturing expansion, the rise in the GNP all suggest that the widespread notion that we had passed into postindustrialism was premature, to say the least. It isn't particularly comforting that postindustrialism was one of the only bits of conventional economic wisdom with a positive spin.

5. WRIGHT OFF

Jim Wright. Why isn't the Jim Wright story turning into the Jim Wright scandal? It may yet, but the story's fizzle so far reveals something about news structure. Wright's situation isn't playing off any related Democratic Party themes. Had the Wright story broken under Carter, when Democratic leadership seemed ineffectual, it might well have been different. Stories play for a reason. Ask Meese.

6. THE INNER TUBE

Two-tier TV. The tonier critics are worried about the transformation of broadcast TV into a video tabloid aimed at a shrunken audience of lower-class action fans. Fox shows like "America's Most Wanted" and "A Current Affair" are pointing the way to "near-snuff" entertainment, but network splatter news, confessional talk shows, and Morton Downey are playing their part.

7. POPPED GUNS

Guns. The Reagan ethos announced itself when the Army inserted firing artillery into its lifestyle TV commercials. The current defensive, apologetic NRA spots are Taps for that ethos. Pro-gun feeling is fading, anti-gun legislation is spreading; the gun lobby has, by and large, lost its political clout again. Even toy gun laws are popping up.

8. LADIES OF THE CLUB

Private clubs. The struggle between women and private clubs smacks of the Iran-Iraq war; neither side is very appealing. Certain rich women want to get richer. Good for them. But what about the rest of us? These women are happy to keep the clubs' class discrimination. In fact, that's sort of their point. Do we really want to trash remaining notions of privacy over this?

9. WILLOW, THE WISP

Summer movies. Nothing is so brittle as yesterday's smashing success. One of the culture's secret vices is the pleasure we take in watching success publicly disintegrate. Ask George the Duck Lucas. *Willow*'s box office is being minutely examined, and there's no escaping a widespread schadenfreude over the low figures.

10. TICKED OFF

Lyme disease. Had yourself checked for Lyme disease yet? What are you waiting for? This tick-borne malady is cover-story stuff. Here are the symptoms: nobody ever heard of it until a few years ago; its manifestations are unbelievably ambiguous; lots of people—you, for example—may have it without knowing it; doctors are having trouble diagnosing it. You do look a little peaked.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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makes the deal look like something much simpler than money laundering: just a way for high-powered lobbyists to load Wright's pockets with cash.

It isn't clear that any of this breaks the rules. Members of Congress have great leeway in spending campaign funds, and book royalties are excluded from House limits on outside income. Wright, in fact, suggested this loophole when the rules were written. If ever there was a case for rewriting the rules, this is it.

The book deal is vintage Wright—possibly not illegal, but definitely not good. Repeatedly he's used his office to try to enrich business partners or benefactors. The most dramatic example came in 1979, when he pressed into Anwar Sadat's hand a letter asking for a favor worth $100 million to a friend who, a few weeks earlier, had cut him in on a promising oil deal.

Perhaps the most unsettling of Wright's recent adventures is the most clearly legal: interventions with the Federal Home Loan Bank Board on behalf of troubled Texas savings and loan institutions. Of course, members of Congress are always trying to get a "fair hearing" for constituents before regulators—especially constituents who subsidize the right political causes. But Wright went to bat for some very dubious characters and played unusually hard ball. In his crusade to keep the bank board from cracking down on fly-by-night Texas S&Ls, he demanded, and sometimes got, special treatment for S&L owners such as Don Dixon, a jet-setting Democratic contributor who was later sued for fraud by the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation. And Wright pulled no punches. When the bank board resisted, he threatened to sit on legislation bailing out the FSLIC—whose precarious condition, brought on by exactly the sort of people Wright was defending, remains a source of national concern. It's one thing for a congressman to make a phone call on behalf of a constituent involved in some obscure regulatory dispute. It's quite another for the Speaker of the House to hold the national interest hostage to the fate of a few high flyers who richly deserve bankruptcy.

In trying to keep the upper hand in the sleaze issue, Democrats can draw valid distinctions between Wright's mess and Ed Meese's. First, the irony of a public servant's betrayal of the public trust is never more pungent than when he's attorney general. Second, Wright's connection to Dukakis is weaker than the link between Meese et al. and Bush, who has been eagerly basking in the administration's aura for years. On the other hand, Republicans can be expected to note that Wright, as Speaker of the House, would play a large role in a Dukakis government. The question, they'll say, is whether you want a Meese in your president's past or a Wright in his future.

What can the Democrats do? First, loudly welcome an expeditious ethics committee inquiry. If the results are sufficiently damning, and Wright turns out to possess grace under pressure, he might defuse the issue by announcing before November that he's stepping down as Speaker. But, since neither of these is very likely, Democrats will probably have to wait until January and then ask whether Wright is the man they want leading their cause. We vote no. And the reason isn't just his ethical obtuseness (although that will be the excuse for raising the question). It's his archaic political style and his attendant lack of vision. He's made a science of pork-barrel politics, turning the Dallas-Fort Worth area into an amusement park for defense contractors. Indeed, bringing home the bacon has been the guiding light in Wright's legislative history. He likes big water projects for Texas. He liked the Vietnam War, with its appetite for Texas-built helicopters. He likes oil companies. The only other consideration is prevailing political winds. Thus, in 1964, as a Southern congressman, Wright opposed the Civil Rights Bill, but in the 1970s, as the South grew more progressive, and his political base expanded with his elevation to majority leader, he became very bullish on civil rights.

Wright's defenders note that ethics has never been one of Congress's strong suits. True, but the post-Watergate world calls for party leaders who are cleaner than tradition dictates. Similarly, pork has always been part of the game, but it shouldn't be the *name* of the game, especially in an age when the common good desperately calls for sacrifices by special interests. Finally, "you gotta go along to get along" isn't the kind of advice Democrats need when they're trying to regain their ideological bearings. It isn't yet clear what the Democratic Party will be after Ronald Reagan leaves town, but it's already safe to say that Jim Wright doesn't fit into the picture.

NOTEBOOK

□ THE FOG OF WAR:

Hezbollah Gains in Beirut Fighting

—*Washington Post*, May 25

Arafat Regaining Supremacy in Embattled Beirut

—*New York Times*, same day

□ ATHLETE'S FETUS:

Pregnant Women Warned Against Workouts

—*Washington Post*, May 27

Exercise in Pregnancy Found Unharmful to Fetus

—*New York Times*, May 28

□ WHERE DO THEY GET OFF?

" 'I didn't mind lecturing to 1,000 students,' Cox told me over coffee before a recent class. 'In fact, I kind of got off on it." —*New York Times Magazine*, May 22, page 20 (profile of Professor Harvey Cox)

"Despite the high drama of the NFL sidelines, he really gets off in the classroom." —same magazine, same issue, page 52 (profile of Dr. Harry Edwards)

(thanks to Mary Neagoy, New York, New York)

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WHITE HOUSE WATCH

IN THE EVIL EMPIRE

Moscow

Richard Nixon is right. One of his pieces of wisdom, passed on to President Reagan several years ago, is that you get better publicity when you go to the other guy's country for a summit. The summit in Moscow, Reagan's fourth in 40 months (after Geneva, Reykjavik, and Washington), was far and away his best. He dozed off twice in public events, droned on in his speeches about movies he'd seen, and made a bad joke about Russian dissidents being "disagreeable." But he still managed to dominate the summit. Reagan even got away with starting a speech to Soviet writers and artists with an antique one-liner: "As Henry VIII said to each of his six wives, I won't keep you long." It got a laugh.

Asked the first day of the summit, May 29, what was on his agenda with Gorbachev, Reagan said, "Meetings." Nothing was further from the truth. Reagan and his aides figured the four meetings with Gorbachev would produce small progress toward a pact reducing strategic weapons, the usual insignificant treaties to sign, and perhaps a slight deepening of the Reagan-Gorbo friendship. In other words, not much. At this summit, the private meetings were less important than Reagan's public appearances. In them, he had one thing on his mind, human rights. He harped on the subject and turned the four days in Moscow into a human rights summit, not an arms control summit as the prior three had been. This time Reagan was on offense. Gorbo, partly because he had to be a nice host, was on defense.

The Soviets hated it, none more than spokesman Gennady Gerasimov, who sneered publicly at Reagan. But the White House gambled that Gorbachev himself wouldn't get his back up, and he didn't. "He wanted the Moscow summit to be a success, so he swallowed the human rights stuff," said a senior Reagan aide. This issue lent itself to being "dramatized" by public events, the aide insisted. Besides, only by going public might Reagan's concern for the plight of Jewish refuseniks, persecuted Christians, and political dissidents "reach" the Soviet people. Secretary of State George Shultz had cautioned against dwelling on human rights. But he was pleasantly surprised that every human rights event went swimmingly.

A little-known pastime of Reagan's is keeping track of Soviet dissidents. He gets letters from Americans related to Soviets who face persecution, and he talks from time to time to some of these relatives. He also gets regular reports on dissident cases from the State Department, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, and the National Security Council. He has a personal rooting interest in eight or ten dissident families, including those of Abe Stolar, an American citizen who lives in Moscow because he can't get his Russian wife out, and Tatyana Zieman, a refusenik. Both Stolar and Zieman, it turned out, sat at Reagan's table at Spaso House, the American ambassador's residence in Moscow that was the scene of an extraordinary event on May 30, day two of the summit. On live TV, Reagan listened to three dissidents and then spoke himself. His aides thought a session at Spaso House would be less provocative than a Reagan visit to a dissident's home. Maybe it was, a little. Nonetheless it occurred a dozen blocks or so from the Kremlin, the heart of darkness. That was provocative enough.

Reagan was embarrassed by the adoration the dissidents showered on him. He blushed. He thinks of these people as heroes. Yet they were so noisy in passing the name cards they found on the tables to Reagan for his autograph that Jack Matlock, the American ambassador, had to ask them to stop. They were distracting from the speakers. "For the president, it's the individual dissidents and their plights that symbolize the larger problem of emigration from the Soviet Union, freedom of travel, freedom of religion, and so on," says White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater. Reagan's 11-minute speech to them was emotional, but he didn't weep, as I thought he would. He promised to push for "more, always more" respect for human rights in the Soviet Union.

Two hours earlier Reagan had pitched for religious freedom in a visit to Danilov Monastery. He delivered a long quote about church bells from exiled novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, not exactly the favorite writer of Soviet authorities. The next day he told a lunch gathering at the House of Men of Letters that he hopes Solzhenitsyn will soon be "published in the land he loves." At that event Reagan nodded off while the head of the cinematographers' union talked up the creative fruits of socialism. Reagan awakened in time to address the interesting question of how his acting background had helped him in politics. It taught him to "grasp" a broad vision of what he was trying to achieve in politics, like an actor or director envisioning the whole of a movie being put together in small parts. And after learning to get "inside" different characters he played, he said, he started "listening . . . to the cacophonous voices of ordinary people and trusting those millions of people, keeping out of their way, not trying to act the all-wise and all-powerful, not letting government act that way."

THAT BIT OF self-analysis was new to me. To good effect, Reagan quoted a bunch of authors he probably hasn't read—poets Anna Akhmatova and Nickolay Gumilev, and William Faulkner. To the dissidents, he quoted Pushkin. At Moscow State University on May 31, day three of summit four, he quoted Boris Pasternak and Gogol. Anyway, dissident historian Roy Medvedev liked Reagan better than the two Soviets who spoke at the lunch for writers and artists. "The Soviet cultural figures talk like politicians and Reagan talked like a person of culture," he said. "The Soviet speeches should have been happier with lively anecdotes. Reagan gave the best speech."

Students at Moscow State were the toughest audience Reagan encountered. They sat stone-faced for most of his

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speech extolling economic freedom and denouncing "government planners." He got no applause and one laugh during the 32-minute speech. The laugh came when he told of a woman who recited a folk legend to a lazy bureaucrat. "When a baby is born, an angel comes down from heaven and kisses it on one part of the body." Those kissed on the hand are handymen, those on the forehead are clever. "And I've been trying to figure out where the angel kissed you so that you should sit there for so long and do nothing." Reagan answered questions for 30 minutes after his speech. The students were charmed.

GORBACHEV RAISED hardly a peep of protest about Reagan's human rights campaign. He must have been softened up by Reagan's incessant praising of him. Gorbachev tried to deflect the issue by proposing a committee to study the problem. Reagan didn't buy that. Finally, at his June 1 press conference, Gorbachev said he was "not filled with admiration" for Reagan's "propaganda gambits" on human rights. Snide criticism was orchestrated by Gerasimov. He noted his "sense of satisfaction that we learned President Reagan, who has not visited libraries very often, has read the full text of Gorbachev's book *Perestroika*." (It took Reagan six months.) Gerasimov said Reagan was talking about the human rights situation as it existed under Stalin, not under Gorbachev.

Gerasimov had a cleverer strategy at the daily briefing he conducted along with Fitzwater: he called on questioners who challenged the Reagan line on human rights. How dare Reagan attack the Soviets when he's invading Nicaragua? asked the guy from Radio Sandino. Gerasimov also made sure Fitzwater was asked about a delegation of American Indians in Moscow to publicize their claim of human rights abuses by Reagan. Not surprisingly, one of the students at Moscow State asked Reagan about the Indians. Never heard of them, he said. But it might have been better, Reagan added, if Indians hadn't gone to their "preservations, or reservations, I should say."

My impression was that Reagan thought Moscow was a drab, dusty dump. He likes the Soviet people and Gorbo, whom he exonerated of human rights atrocities by blaming them on the "bureaucracy." But the government and the Soviet system and what they've produced—these Reagan detests. In his toast at the state dinner, he lauded Gorbachev and said the people have "soul." But the best he could say about the country itself was to give it credit for "the clearing of the forests," building a modern society, and whipping Hitler—damnation by faint praise. Reagan didn't go to one of the hot new "cooperative" restaurants in Moscow, but that wouldn't have changed his view. I went. Dinner cost $32.50 and tasted like what you get at Denny's.

Soviet security forces punctuated Reagan's point about human rights. When the president was surrounded by well-wishers during an impromptu visit on May 29 to the Arbat shopping area, Soviet guards attacked reporters and cameramen who tried to stay close to Reagan. This convinced one senior aide to Reagan that the Soviets are "very different." Later, Soviet guards tried to bar the American press from the monastery. They relented when a White House advance man threatened to keep the Soviet press out of Reagan's meeting with dissidents. At that event, the Soviets took no chances. They taped the proceedings inside, and then photographed dissidents individually as they left. For Gorbo's sake, Reagan backed away from his "evil empire" charge. But I'll bet he didn't really mean it.

FRED BARNES

The Mob goes yuppie.

LITTLE CAESAR SALAD

" 'Mob Yuppies' said to reshape organized crime"
—*The New York Times*, April 23, 1988

You're not the kind of guy who would be in a place like this.

Ordinarily you'd be happier at some red-and-white checked Chianti joint in Queens, with an Eldorado idling in the parking lot, a mistress tucked away in a garden apartment, and two Feds waiting outside your house with a warrant.

But it's 4:30 in the morning, and you're standing in some loft in SoHo, with a massive grudge, and a sweaty I-Banker who looks like he's going through his own personal triple witching hour. He got into trouble by shorting 50,000 shares of Amalgamated Tech at fifty-three and a quarter; he couldn't meet the margin calls, and now you're in business together.

"Want some chardonnay?" he asks, but you shake your head. You sit on his Mies lounger and try to make yourself comfortable. You watch as he moves under a Schnabel canvas to put a Windham Hill disk on the CD player. You figure the Schnabel is worth 15, maybe 20,000. Maybe more, if you can glue the plates back on. Somewhere in the distance you hear the warble of a BMW burglar alarm crying plaintively in the night.

"I don't have the money," he tells you. "I can't repay the loan." You hear this, and you want to get angry. You want to rough him up. You want to teach him a lesson. You want to break the legs of his Biedermeier tables. But you can't. You're conflicted. You're not supposed to be the kind of guy who does things like that, right? You're not your father. You're not your uncle. Aren't you part of the generation that's supposed to be more enlightened? Aren't you trying to *change* the corporate culture? Yes, you say to yourself. But then you remember what your Uncle Vinnie warned you about in the steam room the other day. "We don't tone muscles," he said. "We are muscle."

Across the loft, the I-Banker fidgets. He pours himself another slug of chardonnay. "My wife left me," he tells

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you. "She was a model. I wanted to be a writer. I loused up the stock deal because my wife left me and I wanted to be a writer." He continues, but you're no longer quite as in touch with your sympathies. On the one hand you can relate. On the other, you want him to grow up. You want him to stop whining. You want him to actualize his life, take responsibility, and deal with a loan shark like a man.

Later, on the street, you take stock. You calculate the pluses and minuses on your emotional balance sheet. You played hard. But not too hard. You took back paper, some T-bills, the Schnabel canvas, and a two-and-a-half-year personal note at three points over prime. You take solace in your final words to him:

"Thanks," you said. "Thank you for sharing."

BRUCE FEIRSTEIN

Bruce Feirstein is a New York writer.

POSTCARD GORI

SAINT JOE

IT SEEMED a shame to be in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, and not travel the 60 miles to Gori, where Joseph Stalin was born and grew up. Soviet law, however, is quite strict on this point—foreigners are not allowed to travel beyond the limits of the city where they happen to be. Still, to get this far and not see his town, his house, the front porch he knew as a young boy was insupportable. I went to the train station and bought a ticket to Gori.

My only specific fear was that the conductor would spot me as an outlander. Soviet commuter trains run on the honor system and tickets are checked only sporadically, but you can never be too sure. Finally, the old woman beside me nudged me with her elbow and, pointing at the window with her thumb, said: "Gori."

I decided to walk from Gori Station: a few tangled streets, a bridge over a river, to Stalin Avenue, which, direct as a command, led to the center of the city. A leafy, crumbly town, Gori's best views are those above the buildings—mountains on every side and, on one, the ruins of a fortress castle, visible from nearly every street. Then, there he was against the sky, in his military greatcoat and tunic, a dark-golden colossus on a pedestal that was itself higher than most Soviet monuments. Like Stalinist architecture, this monument tyrannizes through sheer scale. That mystique survives here in the air: the only place on earth where Stalin is still openly revered.

The center of Stalin Avenue is a pleasant park that leads to the shrine where Iosif Dzhugashvili, "Soso" as his mother called him, was born in 1879 and where he grew up. The humble house, two tiny rooms, adjoined only by the small front porch, has been encased in a massive vaulted mausoleum supported by four classical columns.

At the end of the park is the Stalin Museum, an elegant Renaissance cathedral with arched arcades and a bell tower. You can see Stalin's early poems, report cards, photographs of him at nine and of his mother. There are photos of his father, who, myth has it, beat his young son unmercifully, and then photos of Stalin as young revolutionary, as friend of Lenin and Gorky. A map of his many exiles and escapes. Finally, the museum blossoms with memorabilia of the leader. Presents from all the corners of the world, the pipes he smoked while contemplating collectivization, the pens he used to sign his orders. The last case contains his marshal's greatcoat and cap. Though its wearer has been dead for 35 years, his coat, I'm told, can still somehow generate genuine dread.

Before entering a separate room that contains what appears to be Stalin's death mask, I find myself flanked by two quotations. One is from Stalin: "As for me, I am only Lenin's disciple." The other is from Gorbachev: "*Perestroika* is the continuation of the great achievements begun by the October Revolution." They both claim descendancy from Lenin, and they may well both be right.

THERE'S A DELAY at the station. I find a seat in the waiting room at the foot of a looming, all-white statue of Stalin backed by a red arch, that sentimental ruby red so often seen in the U.S.S.R., and begin reading one of Gorbachev's speeches recently published in pamphlet form. Gorbachev, Lenin, Stalin, *perestroika*, NEP, gulag, *glasnost* . . .

The lightest touch woke me. I looked up to see a strapping Soviet policeman in a long gray coat against a background of Stalin and the red arch. In the politest of tones, he asked: "Would you please come with me?"

The waiting room at the station fell silent as the policeman and I moved toward the door. I was shown into a narrow room where one man in plainclothes sat at a desk and five others sat in a row by the wall. The man in the middle was already hostile to me. Swarthy, mustached, he had melancholy eyes. The KGB chief also looked at me suspiciously but at least he radiated the portly self-content of a man who thinks he's done pretty well for himself.

The questioning began. Who was I? Why did I have no identification apart from American Express traveler's checks? Why did I speak Russian so well? Why was I wandering around Gori with a camera? To add to the sense of dislocation, all this had to be communicated in Russian, a second language for both myself and the chief. "Don't you know that it is strictly forbidden for foreigners to travel from one Soviet city to another without official permission?"

Now it was time to lie to the KGB. "I asked in Tbilisi if it was all right to travel to Gori and people said, sure, you can take a train or a bus."

"What if, God forbid, something had happened to you, an accident, how could we have known whom to notify?"

I admitted I had acted carelessly and might have complicated the work of identifying my body. More questions. What hotel was I staying in in Tbilisi? Where was my hotel

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pass? What was my room number? The chief took a long look at me, his eyes requiring that mine stay with his. "Don't worry," he said, "I'm not going to arrest you."

"Thank God," I said with such spontaneous sincerity that everyone laughed, except the man with the melancholy eyes. An awkwardness followed. Theoretically free to go, I did not feel entirely dismissed.

"Would you mind," said the chief, "if I asked you a few questions of a more general nature?"

"Not at all," I said.

Leaning forward, the chief regarded me more avidly than ever as he asked: "That *negr*, can he be your next president?"

Dutifully, I explained that even though we had made considerable progress in human rights—not too long ago blacks couldn't vote and now Jackson was a presidential candidate—it was still impossible for a black man to hold the highest office. They all seemed relieved that America would not be able to flaunt such a blatant symbol of democracy, at least not this time through.

"The next question," said the chief, "is—do Americans respect Shevardnadze?"

Since Shevardnadze was a Georgian, it would have been impolite to speak of him in his native parts in anything but superlatives. "A true statesman, a man of international horizons, every bit the equal of our Shultz."

"And one last question, if I may," said the chief. "How do Americans in general and you personally think of our Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin?"

It was sad, touching, absurd. It all came down to local pride. But to talk with the KGB about Stalin in his own hometown was a unique opportunity, and one I couldn't let pass. Trimming a little here and there, I said that Americans saw Stalin as a great historical leader who had industrialized Russia and led the country to victory in the Second World War but also as a man who had done great evil. The chief had hoped for something more grandiose but seemed willing to settle for that.

The door flew open and the policeman called in: "His train's here."

"But I don't have a ticket!" I cried, rising to my feet.

"You don't have a ticket? Run, get him a ticket!" said the chief with a brisk gesture of command to a subordinate who leaped up from his chair. I was escorted by all six to the train. Shaking hands, wishing each other goodbye, we did everything but exchange addresses and promise to write. As I mounted the stairs, I turned to the chief and asked: "And what do you personally think of Stalin?"

"Me? Personally? Think of Stalin?" he said, nonplussed.

"Yes."

"I think . . . he was a great . . . strategist," said the chief, taking a step away with each word.

RICHARD LOURIE

Richard Lourie is the author of the recently published novel *Zero Gravity* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).

Here we go again.

DÉTENTE INC.

WITH RONALD REAGAN and Mikhail Gorbachev exchanging regular visits and finding more and more to agree about, détente is busting out all over once again. In a contest sponsored by a Washington think tank, more than 200 people contributed ideas for new U.S.-Soviet cooperative endeavors. Suggestions included world pollution control; a multinational organ-donor bank; joint "adoption" of a Third World country; establishment of an American University of Moscow; and making the ruble a convertible currency in world exchanges. This April more than 500 American businessmen accompanied Secretary of Commerce William Verity to Moscow to explore trade opportunities. The U.S. Information Agency's cultural exchange program with the Soviet Union for 1987-89 includes nearly 100 performing arts companies, 20 traveling exhibitions, and 50 academic and youth exchange programs involving close to 1,000 participants.

That's just the beginning. Besides talking about the big war and peace issues, Reagan and Gorbachev have signed agreements on civil aviation, housing, energy, and transportation. They've set up a joint project to save the ozone layer. And in Moscow they signed a pact to allow the Soviets (now that they've given up whale hunting) to fish in U.S. territorial waters. The two sides are talking about joint space probes, including the Mars mission proposed by Gorbachev in his *Washington Post* interview. Meanwhile, according to the Modern Language Association, nearly 34,000 college students were studying Russian in 1986, 10,000 more than in 1980.

The warming trend between Moscow and Washington has set dozens of groups to work—especially in the United States—considering how far this can go, and how far it should go. In a project called Public Summit nearly 1,000 citizens in four cities thrashed out "alternative futures" for U.S.-Soviet relations in the year 2010 under the auspices of the Public Agenda Foundation and Brown University's Center for Foreign Policy Development, both politically middle-of-the-road organizations. Three-quarters of the participants favored either a future of across-the-board cooperation with the Soviets or one in which the two countries drastically reduced their nuclear arsenals but continued to compete on other levels. Less than 40 percent favored an effort to achieve U.S. military superiority, and only 12 percent wanted the U.S. to pull back from its world commitments and defend only North America.

Among numerous studies on the future of U.S.-Soviet relations, almost none come to the conclusion that the current rapprochement is bad. A few Sovietologists, such as Harvard's Marshall Goldman, are skeptical that Gorbachev can succeed with *perestroika*. Henry Kissinger sees little evidence that Gorbachev has given up the traditional Sovi-

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et drive for geopolitical supremacy. But most studies come to the conclusion that his program represents a grand opportunity—for "normalization" of relations or "stable coexistence," the term adopted by a joint panel of Georgi Arbatov's USA-Canada Institute in Moscow and the dovish American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations in Washington.

IT WOULD BE out of character for Americans not to hope for the best from Gorbachev's programs of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, which seem to promise a better life and more freedom for the Soviet people as well as efficiency for the Soviet economy. Americans also naturally hope that Gorbachev's "new political thinking" really means a reduction in military competition between the superpowers. Polling conducted in connection with the Public Summit project indicates that 72 percent of Americans have a favorable impression of Gorbachev and 58 percent think he is more interested in peace than previous Soviet leaders. Sixty-six percent believe that Gorbachev's policies will lead to a freer Soviet society and 52 percent think that if Gorbachev were forced from power, the effect on the United States would be negative.

At the same time, the polls indicate a healthy absence of innocent euphoria about détente. Asked by Market Opinion Research if weakness would lead the Soviet Union to attack U.S. allies, 64 percent said yes, and 58 percent said they believed that the Soviet Union was still likely to instigate troubles in the Third World. Thirty-five percent said that Gorbachev was less dangerous than past Soviet leaders. Twenty percent said he was more dangerous. The rest were still undecided, which is a sensible posture for experts as well as ordinary citizens.

What's missing in America's response to Gorbachev, though, is a strategy—and that can come only from the White House. Implicitly, the Reagan administration seems to have made a decision that the success of *perestroika* is in America's national interest. It has never said so explicitly, though, nor has it ever made clear how it will try to guide the process. Of course, it never uses the word "détente" to describe the rapprochement that's occurred since Gorbachev's arrival in power. As one aide put it, "détente is a tarnished term" that recalls a failed policy of the Nixon-Kissinger era, a policy that Reagan opposed during the 1976 and 1980 presidential races, even though he may be close to replicating it now.

According to Secretary of State George Shultz, what's developing between the superpowers is a "relationship." In a key speech last February in Seattle, Shultz said that "we are near a threshold of a sustainable U.S.-Soviet relationship" and "we are striving to develop a more open, predictable, stable, and constructive relationship."

In place of an explicit overall strategy, the Reagan administration has a four-track agenda of seeking agreements on arms control, regional conflicts, human rights, and bilateral issues such as trade and exchanges. There is linkage between trade and human rights because Congress has written it into law. It's tacitly understood that if Jewish immigration rises to 40,000 persons per year (from the present 12,000), legislated restrictions on trade and credit may be waived. But on other fronts, the administration seems to have been pursuing a START agreement, conventional and chemical arms reductions, Soviet withdrawals from Afghanistan and Angola, and expansion of human rights all on different tracks, without much connection between them.

Hard-liners such as former Pentagon aide Richard Perle fear this is going to lead to excessive eagerness for agreements without consideration of what the United States might be giving up or whether the Soviets are giving anything in return. He isn't alone in his leeriness, though. President Gerald Ford's national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, also worries that the administration "doesn't know what it's after." He says that "as a country, we're unable to maintain our vigilance in a climate of détente. Détente can work if we can be cooperative and punitive as conditions require, but as a people, we don't know how to be tough on the Soviets unless there is some obvious provocation."

TO GIVE the Reagan administration its due, though, it has introduced some novel and tough elements into U.S.-Soviet bargaining. Instead of merely capping nuclear arsenals, it sought reductions—and was willing to build up U.S. power to create incentives for the Soviets to trade. It held out for much more intrusive verification requirements than previous administrations, and secured lopsided reductions that will serve as precedents for other agreements. On the regional level, it developed the Reagan Doctrine to challenge Soviet rule in Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua. It has pushed hard on human rights issues, refusing to bow to Soviet objections.

And instead of treating trade and other bilateral connections simply as a sweetener for the overall U.S-Soviet relationship, the administration has insisted that various projects also be justifiable on their own terms. For example, various business interests tried to get Reagan to issue a broad endorsement for U.S.-Soviet joint ventures during the Washington summit. Instead, he limited his support to ventures that were "economically viable." The administration is hesitating on the joint Mars project, apparently because the Soviets want to provide the space vehicle while we would furnish artificial intelligence technology that's also useful for controlling Mach 3 jet fighters and automated battle tanks.

Even though Gorbachev gets major credit in the media for making the new détente possible, the Reagan administration can legitimately claim vindication for its overall approach of bargaining from strength and of waiting for favorable bargaining conditions, including the arrival of a reform-minded Soviet leader. Reagan's liberal critics nagged him to accept Soviet terms under Leonid Brezhnev. Even these critics now acknowledge that Gorbachev's terms are better, though they now urge Reagan to grab them. What worries moderate critics such as Scowcroft is that, as Reagan's time in office nears its end, he and Shultz

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are tempted to grab. They fear that deals such as START may leave the next president in a weaker bargaining position.

Both Michael Dukakis and George Bush seem fully to support the new détente. Bush claims to understand that Reagan's initial toughness opened the way for it, but he has no program to exploit this understanding on his own. Dukakis does not accept the premise. He believes that it was Gorbachev who launched the new thaw out of a belief that his country would collapse economically if it continued all-out military competition with the West. Dukakis has not indicated whether he will exploit Soviet weakness or be satisfied to perpetuate détente for its own sake. If President Reagan has no strategy for his U.S.-Soviet policy, he's still miles ahead of those who want to succeed him.

MORTON M. KONDRACKE

How not to deregulate banking.

THE FIRE WALL

IN THE CURRENT move to deregulate banking, some dubious alliances have formed. The Senate's most liberal Democrats are defending Wall Street while commercial bankers are successfully posing as populist heroes.

Big banks today are in big trouble, buffeted by Third World loan losses, real estate busts, and foreign competition. But their biggest travail is one-way domestic competition. For over a decade commercial banks have been slowly nibbled to death by unregulated "financial service" mutants that are permitted to skim off the most lucrative parts of the banking business, while an archaic regulatory structure largely keeps the banks out of other profitable financial enterprises. The widely advertised remedy, in keeping with the deregulatory spirit of the age, is to permit banks into the more remunerative (and speculative) side of finance too. Last March 31 the Senate attempted to rationalize a long series of piecemeal incursions by voting to repeal most of the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act, thus allowing banks to pursue a range of riskier businesses. If the House concurs, this will be an epochal change of philosophy.

In the 80 years or so of modern banking the regulatory pendulum has swung back and forth between enthusiasm for entrepreneurial zeal and concern for what the regulators call "safety and soundness." In times of boom, safety and soundness seem a silly, archaic, and anti-competitive neurosis. In times of bust, the mood tilts back toward prudence. Bank regulation attempts to balance several policy concerns: assuring a secure banking system, protecting depositors, allowing the financial economy to innovate and efficiently channel capital to the real economy. More recently regulators also have tried to make sure that U.S.-based bankers and brokers are not at a competitive disadvantage against foreigners.

The dissents against repeal of Glass-Steagall boil down to three: letting banks become more speculative puts the whole system at greater risk; it intensifies the conflicts of interest that already permeate the financial industry; and, more parochially, it will cut into the large profits enjoyed by archrival securities firms.

The political logic of bank deregulation is less a matter of how best to reconcile competitiveness with safety than how to satisfy the turf concerns of several powerful financial industries, each with heavy investments in congressional allies. If we do X for the banks and Y for the insurance companies, then it becomes necessary to do Z to take care of the securities houses, but then we have to do X-prime for the savings and loans, and then Z-prime to even things out for the banks. There! Is everybody happy?

Apparently everybody was, since the Senate vote for repeal was 94-2. The Senate's most liberal Democrats were oddly allied with Wall Street's most powerful investment bankers. The Banking Committee chairman, Senator William Proxmire, an idiosyncratic populist, who accepts no campaign contributions from anyone, finally decided that brokers are bigger scoundrels than the bankers, and cast his lot with the Republicans and the American Bankers Association to champion repeal. In the House, which has yet to act, the Banking Committee chairman is Representative Fernand St. Germain of Rhode Island, one of Congress's bottomless special interest troughs.

Remember the famous 1933 photo of J. P. Morgan Jr. sitting incongruously with a circus dwarf on his lap? Morgan was testifying under subpoena before an investigation by the Senate Banking Committee of the financial manipulations that helped trigger the 1929 stock market crash. (A p.r. agent had thrust the midget onto the portly Morgan as a sight gag.) Historians and economists generally conclude that the crash had multiple causes, but in that winter of 1933 Congress was zeroing in on one particular villain: speculative investment schemes promoted by large banks with brazen conflicts of interest. In a typical scheme, the bank would underwrite a stock or bond, sell it to investors via a subsidiary "investment trust" (the forerunner of modern mutual funds), and even lend investors the money to buy the bond. If a security underwritten by the bank turned sour, the bank redoubled its efforts to unload it on the public. Sifting through the wreckage of Wall Street in a series for THE NEW REPUBLIC in the spring of 1930, John T. Flynn unearthed scandalous details of how banks used investment trusts to peddle paper for corporate clients to unsuspecting investors who had trusted the bank to provide disinterested fiduciary advice. Flynn concluded that bankers ought not be permitted to sponsor investment trusts.

A long tradition, dating back to the National Banking Act of 1865, held that commercial banking—the taking of deposits and the making of loans—was fundamentally different from investment banking—the far riskier enterprise of underwriting and marketing securities. But in the 1920s,

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in a lax regulatory environment, many large banks found it profitable to exploit what today would be called the synergy of engaging in both enterprises, often corruptly.

CONGRESS REPAIRED the financial system on multiple fronts. It converted the fledgling (and quasi-private) Federal Reserve System into a genuine central bank. It built a rigid wall between commercial banking and investment banking. It created an entirely separate regulatory scheme for investment banking and stock brokerage, based primarily on the principle of disclosure and the prohibition of insider trading. Commercial banks got closer regulatory supervision, deposit insurance, and a prohibition against underwriting or marketing securities. Congress even limited the interest that banks could pay depositors to help banks resist indulging more speculative ventures in pursuit of high returns.

Under this system an investor of more entrepreneurial bent was free to take his chances in the largely unregulated securities market. But a depositor putting his money in the bank mainly for safekeeping and for modest interest could be sure it was safe. Glass-Steagall also reflected the desire of competing financial magnates to screw the House of Morgan, which was the one banker-broker that had managed to run both businesses competently.

The regulatory plan of the 1930s began to unravel in the 1970s, a decade that brought inflation, technological innovation, globalization, and renewed ideological support for free markets. High inflation meant that small savers whose interest rates remained capped were subsidizing borrowers. Enterprising savings banks invented NOW accounts, a checking account by another name, except that a NOW account was not subject to checking account regulations, and could pay interest. Banks lobbied for, and got, permission to pay interest on checking accounts too. In the meantime stockbrokers devised cash management accounts that got around the ceiling on interest rates altogether. Although they did not make commercial loans and were not insured by the FDIC, these hybrids looked liked banks and quacked like banks. Thanks to a tolerant regulatory climate, companies like Sears, Roebuck breached not only the wall between commercial and investment banking, but the more fundamental wall between finance and commerce, by having affiliated banks, stock brokerages, insurance companies, and real estate subsidiaries.

Meanwhile, the very heart of the banking business—making commercial loans—came under competitive attack. It used to be that corporations relied on banks for their short-term credit. But the advent of the computer made it easy for corporations to issue their own IOUs, sometimes underwritten by investment bankers, for direct sale to pension funds, insurance companies, and the general public. This market in "commercial paper" eliminates the bank's traditional role as middleman. It removed a reliable and essentially risk-free source of business. Banks also lost most of their auto loans, as the auto companies used their own financing operations.

The paper that finances such non-bank lending is converted into securities, which are then sold by investment banks in the nation's money markets. Almost any such loan—an auto loan, a mortgage loan, or for that matter a loan to Bolivia—can be "securitized." But under Glass-Steagall, commercial banks are not allowed to sell securities. The banks did succeed in expanding into some other lines of business. But on balance the gradual breach of Glass-Steagall has been a one-way street. Non-banks, whose capital ratios are unregulated, which are not picked over by bank examiners, which lack deposit insurance, have swarmed into the banking business. And banks have not been able to swarm out.

The final assault on the logic of Glass-Steagall came from globalization. Banks in most foreign countries—the main exception being Japan—do not labor under the constraints of Glass-Steagall. Nor does the foreign affiliate of a U.S. bank. Morgan may not be permitted to underwrite a corporate bond in New York, but its Zurich office is free to underwrite it in the Eurodollar market, nominally operating through a branch in the Netherlands Antilles. This means that a market that could be operating at home is artificially driven offshore, where there is even less regulation.

MUCH OF THIS erosion required regulatory complicity, but the breech now seems irreversible, and defending Glass-Steagall has gradually lost credibility as a progressive cause. Republicans have mostly concluded that we now have one big, undifferentiated "financial services industry," and that the solution is to allow any financial company to compete in whatever lines of business it chooses to pursue. The trouble is that banks enjoy a "safety net" of protections from the federal government. Though it is not practical for the government to permit a big bank to fail, it is even less practical to extend the federal financial safety net to the entire economy.

If a bank or its holding company affiliates were permitted to take huge risks, and the bank found itself on the brink of insolvency, the government would find itself holding the bag. In one recent case, where the malefactor was Continental Illinois (which the taxpayers had already bailed out once), the bank improperly used its own assets to bail out a failing commodities affiliate. Extending the federal safety net, by proxy, to the entire financial industry would intensify the moral hazard of excessive speculation by banks. But failing to do it would jeopardize the security of banks. The only solution is either to repair the Glass-Steagall wall radically, or—paradoxically—to intensify supervision of newly deregulated bankers and brokers.

Proxmire, the longtime nemesis of the bankers, used to be the man with his finger in the financial dike, resisting further assaults on Glass-Steagall. He had an ally in St. Germain, a recipient of massive campaign contributions from savings and loan associations and brokerage houses that prefer to see the one-way shackles of Glass-Steagall remain. During the six-year Republican Senate majority, Banking Committee chairman Jake Garn sought repeal of Glass-Steagall, but failed to get it.

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After Proxmire returned to the Banking chair in 1987, he became convinced that the Glass-Steagall schema, gradually eroding in one direction, was failing to do much for safety and soundness. Instead it put the big money center banks in real jeopardy, while the securities industry, insulated from serious competition, reaped supernormal profits. The partial breaching of Glass-Steagall mainly helped quasi-banks like Amex, Sears, Roebuck, and Fidelity, while it made commercial banks compete with one hand behind their backs. Proxmire and his staff watched with mounting disgust as his fellow Democrats used fear of Glass-Steagall repeal as a device to shake down Wall Street for campaign contributions. Far better, Proxmire decided, to legislate a repeal, and get some safety standards as the quid pro quo.

Until the very end, the committee defenders of Glass-Steagall were men like Don Riegle of Michigan, Alan Cranston of California, Chris Dodd of Connecticut, and Tim Wirth of Colorado, senators with impeccably liberal voting records and all recipients of substantial largess from Wall Street.

ALTHOUGH PAC contributions from commercial banks nominally about equal those of investment banks, the bigger source of Wall Street money, particularly to congressional Democrats, is in the form of donations collected individually by partners of the major securities firms. As one observer puts it: "Sociologically, investment bankers are not averse to picking up the phone and asking. They're cold callers. Commercial bankers are used to having people come to them hat in hand. They're salaried bureaucrats. The investment bankers are the better political entrepreneurs."

But this year, in the wake of the stock market crash and insider trading scandals, sympathy for Wall Street ebbed. The populist case for Glass-Steagall seemed ludicrous. The Banking Committee report points out that underwriting profits and salaries is exorbitant, and suggests that investment banking is a refuge of oligopoly profits. Proxmire drafted a bill that allowed commercial banks into most areas of investment banking. The final and most controversial step, permitting banks to underwrite securities, will require a separate concurring vote, in 1991.

Proxmire's notion was to balance this freer competition with what he called a "fire wall," separating the bank from its non-bank affiliates. In principle, a bank's investment banking activities would be regulated by the SEC, just as a broker's are. A bank could not bail out its non-bank businesses. But many critics doubt that the fire wall would work when a bank holding company subsidiary got into serious trouble. And the fire wall was weakened during negotiations in committee, and again on the Senate floor.

As banking critic Martin Mayer testified to the Banking Committee, "If you hadn't had Glass-Steagall, the entire Third World debt situation would have developed differently, because they would have peddled this junk to the public as they did in the 1920s."

The Senate bill must still pass the House, and St. Germain, whatever his motives, is dead set against Glass-Steagall repeal. A draft of a bill by St. Germain circulated in recent weeks gives banks some minor new powers, such as underwriting municipal revenue bonds, but keeps them largely out of the investment banking business, and adds new strictures. Next year Proxmire will have retired, and the Senate Banking chairman will be Riegle, a friend of the securities industry.

The late 1980s is one of those moments of tidal change in public philosophy when the tides seem to be flowing inward and outward simultaneously. The ideological appeal of freer markets retains its momentum, as evidenced by the Senate repeal of Glass-Steagall. But in the meantime, following the October 19 crash and new revelations about chronic conflicts of interest in the underwriting and marketing of stocks and bonds, there is a growing movement, mainly in the House, for tighter regulation of Wall Street. This becomes all the more urgent if banks are to be permitted to play in that league.

What remains to be seen is how Congress will ultimately choose to reconcile the philosophical issues and split the difference among the several interested industries. The lowest common denominator approach would simply allow everybody into everybody else's domain, and ignore the conflict-of-interest questions. A highest common denominator approach would allow brokers and bankers to compete with one another, but it would subject both to higher regulatory standards and deny both new relationships that are inherently corrupting. Unless Congress can design indestructible fire walls, it would be better not to permit bankers to play with fire.

ROBERT KUTTNER

The future of a defeat.

JESSE IS HISTORY

"THERE WERE thirteen and now there are three," goes the chorus of one of the shout-songs Jesse Jackson is singing in California and New Jersey as the long primary season approaches its end, "Bush, Dukakis, and me." Now there are three—and after the summer there will be two, and neither of them will be Jesse Jackson. But 50 years from now there will also be two, and it won't be the same two. That is to say, of all the 1988 candidates for president of the United States there will be two whose deeds will be remembered and whose names will be known to every educated or half-educated American. And one of *that* two *will* be Jesse Jackson.

By midsummer the 1988 Jackson campaign will be history, but Jackson himself is already history. Among individual spokesmen for the aspirations of black citizens since the Civil War he is exceeded in fame and impact only by Martin Luther King Jr. and possibly Booker T. Washing-

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ton. It is as certain as such things can be that he will be seen as a larger historical figure than such past leaders of the black masses as Frederick Douglass, Marcus Garvey, or Malcolm X. He has moved into new territory, moved further into it than either he or anyone else ever expected; and because he is still only 46, he may have decades in which to explore and enlarge it.

The aura of history being made began to gather around Jackson right at the beginning of this campaign. It enveloped both him and the country in the days after the Michigan caucuses on March 26, which Jackson won with 113,140 votes as against 98,565 for all his opponents combined—at the time, the largest proportion of the vote (55 percent) that any Democratic candidate had won outside his home state. A sequence of events that could lead to Jackson's nomination—Gore surges, Dukakis falters, Jackson holds firm, a consensus builds that the prize must go to whoever has the plurality of delegate and popular votes at the end of the primaries—was suddenly utterly plausible. The idea of a brokered or pre-brokered convention that would nominate Jackson for vice president on a ticket with Michael Dukakis or Albert Gore or Mario Cuomo seemed, for a few giddy days, not only plausible but verging on probable. What had been imaginary became imaginable, what had been unthinkable became a thought. The republic contemplated the idea of "a black president" in the only way that idea could ever be, however briefly, something more than an abstract hypothesis floating in some indeterminate future: when it was made flesh in the person of a particular man with a face, a voice, a record, a particular set of virtues and flaws. This was an important moment in American history. The moment passed quickly, but it happened, and it cannot be undone.

IT TAKES NOTHING away from Jackson's accomplishment to note that he was as much the occasion as the creator of this moment. Compared with four years ago, Jackson's campaign this year has been a model of organizational efficiency, strategic skill, and rhetorical shrewdness, largely free of the political and moral errors that crippled that earlier effort. Yet fortune cleared the way for him. A great deal has been made this year of Michael Dukakis's luck, of the breaks that made it possible for Dukakis to plod to the nomination. Cuomo stayed out, Hart and Biden imploded, Gephardt collapsed from the weight of the contradiction between his insider record and his outsider message. These breaks for Dukakis were breaks for Jackson too. They enabled him to emerge as the sole representative of the prophetic and populist traditions in the Democratic Party, the only claimant to the nostalgic energies of the movements of the 1960s.

The combination of enough electoral success to make his nomination imaginable and too little to make it actually happen has turned Jackson, the master of the politics of alienation, into a symbol of the redemptive and healing power of American democracy. Certainly Dukakis has done his best to ensure that this is the lesson voters will draw from the Jackson experience. "I see a few Jackson fans and signs around here," Dukakis said good-naturedly at the New Jersey state Democratic convention, touching off cheers and shouts of "We want Jesse!" Striking a note he has sounded everywhere since the week after the New York primary, he continued, "If anybody a year ago would have suggested that the son of immigrants from Massachusetts and a black man that grew up poor in South Carolina would be the two remaining candidates for the Democratic nomination, I don't think anybody would've believed it—and my friends, it happened. It happened."

JACKSON IS unmoved by stories about sons of immigrants, but he is plainly making an effort to see his strong showing as a cause for celebration rather than to see his failure to be nominated as a cause for resentment. He acts out the struggle between these two responses in nearly every speech. Expanding on the "how far we've come" theme at a Newark breakfast attended mostly by black politicians and business people, he made his point with an anecdote about a friend of his, Al Johnson, the first black to have a Cadillac dealership. "Al was upset one morning. He had cars coming back with various problems, he was having trouble keeping mechanics. I said, 'Al, I saw a man this morning at the bus stop cussing.' 'What happened?' 'He was standing there waiting. The bus came by and mud got up on his shoe. And the bus driver didn't wait for him.' I said, 'This man had a problem with *transportation*. Well, you got a problem with transportation too, right?' I said, 'Well, would you rather have that problem waiting on that bus instead of figuring how to get them Cadillacs fixed and rolling?' We're down around the five-yard line. These are the best set of problems we've ever had. Tremendous problems! Tremendous hopes! Tremendous possibilities!" But seconds later the resentment that is never far below the surface bubbled up, and Jackson went into a long complaint about the unfairness of not being awarded a share of the "superdelegate" votes that is exactly proportional to his share of the popular vote in the later primaries.

The Cadillac anecdote won laughter and applause from the audience. Besides making its point, it served as an unintentional reminder that the concrete beneficiaries of Jackson's activities have more often been aspiring car dealers and franchise operators than the sort of people who get mud splashed on their shoes by passing buses. Those activities—the grantsmanship, the heavy pressure on corporations to award contracts to black suppliers and distributors, the equally heavy pressure on black business people to contribute to Jackson's organizations as a tacit commission—have never been especially edifying and have sometimes slipped over into a zone where idealism, opportunism, and intimidation blur into each other. But they can also be understood as an updated, media-driven version of the nexus of patronage, contract-trading, and "honest graft" that the urban political leaders of rising ethnic groups have been practicing for a century.

In his political as well as his economic lobbying activi-

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ties, Jackson has been a traditionalist with a twist. Except for a brief bid for the mayoralty of Chicago in 1971, and until he started running for president five years ago, Jackson had conducted his entire 25-year political life in the realm of protest politics rather than electoral politics. That is why his previous experience was so heavily weighted toward mobilizing blacks rather than toward building interracial coalitions, a skill he has had to learn at the highest level and under the most pitiless scrutiny. But he has always had the kind of ambition that makes presidential candidates, and for him "the movement" was a career as well as a calling. The movement was for him what the St. Louis City Council was for Richard Gephardt or the Massachusetts legislature was for Michael Dukakis.

Jackson may be the most practiced public speaker in America, having given not just speeches but rousing speeches many times a week throughout his adult life. At the Newark breakfast he talked about how he feels when he gives a speech. "I feel responsible," he said. "Ten thousand people left their way to hear what one person had to say. What can you feel except responsible? What can you feel except obligated? I might be tired, but I'm a conduit. And they plug into me. And they shoot this electricity through me. Then my lights come on. And they get the heat! And they get the light! It's reciprocity. They give to me, I give to them. I give to them, they give to me. Reciprocity."

THE AFTERNOON BEFORE, at the Hopewell Baptist Church, there had been plenty of reciprocity. The church is a massive, gloomy structure, a converted synagogue with a Byzantine dome and a huge chandelier in the shape of a Star of David. As Jackson spoke the sound washed back and forth between him and his mostly black audience. The rhyming doggerel of four years ago was almost gone, but his speech, delivered of course without notes or text, had something of the structure and variety of jazz, a kind of music he knows well. (My first glimpse of Jackson this campaign year, by the way, was not at some rally or debate but at the Blue Note, a New York jazz club, where Jimmy Smith, a great jazz organist, was playing. Jackson's entrance made a small, excited stir; Smith greeted him as "brother Jesse Jackson," and, in his honor, played a long, bluesy version of "Amazing Grace.")

Jackson's speech at the Hopewell Baptist Church was sometimes lyrical, the words rushing together, as when he spoke of his mother-in-law's graduation ceremony, which he had just attended: "In California yesterday, Mendicino down to Los Angeles, all night long coming across the country, to Hampton Institute to a commencement service today, a very special celebration. Jackie's mother like my own a teenage mother, born against the odds. Mother died when she was a baby. Bred and grew up against the odds. Shipwrecked, she had to pick up broken pieces and hold on till the morning came. While a teenager she had babies, forged a life together, went north to Virginia, raised those children, sent four of them to college. And after they were married off, at age 29 she went back to high school, got her high school degree. She kept on hoping. Getting up at 4 a.m. every morning to go to work. She went to junior college. Got that degree. Today at age 61 she graduated from college. She kept hope alive."

Sometimes it was staccato, as when he struck a favorite economic theme: "Profits up, wages down, plants closed, economic violence, Reaganomics. Three years ago GM closed 11 plants with 20,000 workers. They opened up 20,000 new jobs in South Korea the same week. The South Koreans did not take jobs from us. GM took jobs to them. Not for better labor but for cheaper labor. Cheap labor there. High prices here. Profits up. Wages down. Workers abandoned. Barracudas. Reaganomics."

Sometimes it was playfully scornful, as when he attacked Vice President George Bush for telling an audience of Mexican-American teenagers that hard physical work is necessary and honorable: "Here is a man should be inspiring them to go to higher heights. But he says, 'You do not need a college education. We still need some people for hard physical work.' When I become president that's exactly what George Bush'll be doing, hard physical work. If he believes in hard physical work let him caddy and chase golf balls. Let him shine some shoes. Let him sell some hot dogs at the ball game! Right on, George Bush!"

And Jackson held the audience's attention even when he explained, in some detail, where he would get the money to pay for the increased social spending he wants: "We're paying more than $300 billion a year for defense. Freeze it. We're paying $150 billion a year defending Europe and Japan 42 years after the war. We've got more troops in Europe today than seven years ago and no threat of war. They are now creditor nations, we are now a debtor nation. Let them share the burden of their own defense. How you come out the hole? Same way you went in the hole. Reagan gave the rich and the powerful a $600 billion party. He said they were going to reinvest in America. They didn't do that. And now they're having a big drunken spree on Wall Street—junk bonds and program trading, all kinds of economic nonsense. Then they want those who were not invited to the party to pay for the party, and that ain't fair. Let the top 600,000 wage earners who make $200,000 or above pay at a 30 percent income tax bracket as opposed to 28 percent. That's about $20 billion a year, and they can afford it. To whom more is given more is required. Slow down these mergers: a merger and acquisition tax, another $10 billion. We cannot manage Reaganomics. We must change Reaganomics, because it assumed that the poor had too much money and the rich had too little money. It's reverse Robin Hood—took from the poor and gave to the rich, paid for by the middle class. We must change the course." These, by the way, are not exactly radical ideas. They are *liberal* ideas.

ON THE STREET in front of the church, a scene was enacted that is repeated at many of Jackson's campaign stops. As a crowd of black kids watched, awe-struck, the candidate waved and smiled and shot the thumbs-up sign as he ducked into his limousine. Secret Service men moved swiftly along the line of cars and buses. Engines revved and

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doors slammed. Then the motorcade, 20 vehicles strong, began to glide out, flanked by motorcycles. The pride stirred by the pageant of power the Jackson campaign has become is both obvious and moving. The question now is whether Jesse Jackson will prove big enough to fill his own shoes.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

The unlikeliest constituency.

JESSE'S JEWS

WHEN A tough-talking Jew from the Bronx named Ed Koch said before the New York primary that any Jew who would vote for Jesse Jackson is "crazy," Jackson declined several opportunities to hit back. He didn't have to; he had some tough New York Jews of his own. And it should be no surprise to anyone familiar with American Jewish culture that many of Jackson's white supporters and activists are Jewish.

The first counterattack came from local Teamsters Union leader Barry Feinstein. At a press conference to announce his endorsement of Jackson, the gruff Feinstein lashed out at Koch for presuming to speak for the city's Jews, and volunteered that he, Feinstein, was "as Jewish as any Jew who ever lived." On the day before the primary Norman Mailer denounced Koch on the *New York Times* op-ed page. Mailer has been active in many causes, but Jewish causes have never featured prominently among them. Mailer announced that he was "one of those crazies who will support Jesse Jackson for president."

Answering Koch on national television was Jackson's campaign manager, Gerald Austin, a professional political consultant from Ohio who was born and raised in a brass-knuckles neighborhood in the South Bronx. The media made much of the alleged irony that Austin is Jewish when he was selected to manage the Jackson campaign last fall. Yet he was so little identified as a Jew during his ten-year political career in Ohio (including running two successful campaigns for Governor Richard Celeste) that Jackson could plausibly claim that he didn't even know Austin's religion when he made his choice.

Austin's roots are in the old left, which was heavily Jewish. In interviews he has described memories of his father serving as Paul Robeson's bodyguard in the 1950s. His mother was associated for decades with the *Jewish Currents* magazine circle. The magazine represented the views of the Communist Party's Jewish section until the mid-1960s, when it broke with the Party over Soviet anti-Semitism, among other issues.

Jackson received an estimated seven percent of Jewish votes in the New York primary. As even Koch now concedes, "crazy" is the least useful word to describe those voters. The Jews for Jackson came with a variety of motives. Some, like Mailer, voted partly to spite Koch. There were left-wingers like the Jewish editors of the *Village Voice* and the *Nation*, who ecstatically endorsed Jackson in the hope that he would lead a reborn and triumphant radical movement. Other Jackson voters are people who generally limit their Jewish self-identity to newspaper ads denouncing Israel.

But Jackson also has gotten the support of Jews prominent in the Democratic Party's liberal wing or active in the Jewish community, or both. Perhaps the most important was Ann Lewis, former political director of the Democratic National Committee. Lewis grew up in Bayonne, New Jersey, as the child of middle-class, actively involved liberal Jews. (Her brother is Massachusetts Representative Barney Frank.) Lewis has been a principal political adviser to Jackson since the end of 1986. In California another significant addition for Jackson has been Stanley Sheinbaum, an influential Democratic Party activist and financial angel. Sheinbaum, who's married to the daughter of movie mogul Harry Warner, has been bankrolling left-liberal causes and organizations ever since he was radicalized by the Vietnam War. He has held several fund-raisers for Jackson at his Los Angeles home. Peter Straus, a vice president of the American Jewish Committee, owner of a broadcasting company, and scion of one of the "Our Crowd" German Jewish families, traveled with Jackson during the New York primary trying to help "build bridges" to the Jewish community.

These new Jackson allies, and others like them, were the dividends of a four-year effort—beginning with his dramatic apology at the 1984 Democratic National Convention—to overcome his "Jewish" problem. "Hymietown," an offhanded remark to a reporter, was actually the least of that problem. In the years before 1984 Jackson said, "Zionism is a kind of poisonous weed choking Judaism"; he blamed Jews in general for Israel's trade with South Africa; he said, "I'm sick and tired of hearing about the Holocaust"; he associated with the viciously anti-Semitic Louis Farrakhan; he embraced Yasir Arafat; and so on.

That's all in the past, say Jackson's Jewish supporters. More recently, they note, Jackson has confronted Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva over Jewish emigration; visited a Nazi concentration camp to denounce President Reagan's visit to the SS cemetery at Bitburg; declared his belief in "secure borders" for Israel; distanced himself from Farrakhan; and called frequently for black-Jewish dialogue.

As Lewis puts it, "I heard Jesse Jackson get up in front of millions of people and apologize—something I rarely heard any other politician do. That's sufficient for me." And many liberal Jews supporting Jackson agree with his position on the Middle East. "The Jewish establishment sees Jackson as a threat and I think they are wrong," says Sheinbaum. "I think [Israeli prime minister] Shamir is a greater threat to Israel than Jackson."

Given the traditional liberalism of the American Jewish community, and the heavy Jewish presence in left-wing causes, it is arguably more surprising how few Jews supported Jackson than how many. Queens College sociolo-

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gist Steven M. Cohen has been polling American Jewish political and social attitudes for the American Jewish Committee for the past eight years. His surveys show strong support by Jews for many of the positions at the core of the Jackson agenda. In Cohen's surveys, for example, Jews consistently favor increased social spending, decreased defense spending, and strong sanctions against South Africa. They register these preferences at a much higher rate than any other group of white voters. Jews score higher than any other ethnic group, including blacks, in their support for such social causes as abortion rights and gay rights.

According to Cohen's surveys, Jews believe that blacks are more likely to be anti-Semitic than other groups. Nevertheless, Jews generally vote for black candidates at a much higher rate than the rest of the white population—in some cases twice as high. Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley received 75 percent of the Jewish vote against only 42 percent of the overall white vote in his 1982 race for governor of California. Harold Washington, the late mayor of Chicago, squeaked through to his first victory—against a Jewish candidate—because 35 percent of the city's Jews voted for him, as against 18 percent of whites as a whole.

Even on Israel, Cohen's surveys show that Jews have less of a problem with the substance of Jackson's positions than the conventional wisdom would allow. For example, an overwhelming majority agreed that "Israel should talk with the PLO if the PLO recognized Israel and renounced terrorism." And a plurality of respondents agreed that "Palestinians have a right to a homeland on the West Bank and Gaza, so long as it does not threaten Israel." In a recent *Los Angeles Times* national poll, Jews overwhelmingly supported "increased autonomy" for the Palestinians. Thirty-one percent also agreed that "Israel [should] give up the occupied territories in exchange for Arab recognition of Israel."

Yet only a tiny fraction of even those American Jews who support "land for peace" and justice for Palestinians trusted Jackson sufficiently to vote for him. Jackson did not exceed ten percent of the Jewish vote in any major Jewish population center during the primaries. The *New York Times*/CBS poll had him at nine percent in New York City. A *Los Angeles Times* exit poll in Pennsylvania gave Jackson eight percent of the Jewish vote. Exit polls on Super Tuesday had Jackson getting only four percent of the Southern Jewish vote. Although these percentages are almost twice as high as Jackson managed in 1984, they are remarkably low for a candidate reaching for the Democratic Party's liberal soul.

In Cohen's surveys roughly ten percent of Jews declare themselves to be totally alienated from Israel and from Jewish life. Yet Jackson didn't even crack the ten percent threshold, let alone dip into the mass of more ethnically involved liberal Jews. In New York and Pennsylvania and on Super Tuesday, Jackson got twice as large a share of the total white vote than of the Jewish vote—exactly the opposite of the usual pattern for black political candidates.

Jackson and his supporters blamed the organized Jewish leadership for poisoning the well. Jackson angrily referred to "aggressive and bitter attacks" on him, not only by Mayor Koch but by "other leaders" as well. "You had the council of presidents [the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations] who were constantly demanding that we meet with them," said Jackson. "The demands were not based on any desire for reconciliation, or any desire to ease people's fears." In fact, during the New York primary, Jewish "leaders" were confused about how to deal with the Jackson phenomenon, rather than aggressively hostile, and thus remained silent.

IN THE California primary, with the second-largest concentration of Jews in the country, Jackson's supporters won't have Ed Koch or Jewish "leaders" to blame. A recent survey in Los Angeles showed that 75 percent of the area's Jews are unaffiliated to any synagogue or Jewish organization. If the hard hearts of the Jewish establishment have been the obstacle to Jackson reaching ordinary Jewish voters, then things should certainly go far better for him in California. California's Jews are more liberal, more assimilated, more distant geographically and emotionally from Israel than Jews on the East Coast. Because of the demographics, some observers expect that Jackson will finally break through to the 20 percent-plus share of the Jewish vote that his supporters long for. But several weeks before the primary California's leading pollster, Mervyn Field, concluded from his data that Jackson was doing no better than 11 percent with Jews, while getting 22 percent of the overall white vote.

So the reversed pattern still holds. From all the evidence it's not because Jesse Jackson is black, or because the Jews haven't been listening to him. They have listened carefully to the text of the redemption and reconciliation sermon, but they apparently continue to hear a disturbing subtext. It was in California at a Jackson fund-raiser last fall that the candidate chastised a young black lawyer for daring to ask him a question about the 1984 Farrakhan episode in a room full of Jews. "Let the Jews speak for themselves," Jackson scolded.

And it was in an interview with the California-based Jewish magazine, *Tikkun*—an interview that was set up to give Jackson a chance to win over the magazine's progressive Jewish readers—that Jackson began reverting to his pre-1984 themes on the Jews. When *Tikkun* editor Michael Lerner threw a preplanned softball question, asking Jackson to tell the readers how he "challenged anti-Semitism" when speaking to blacks on campuses, Jackson responded that he had "not found any anti-Semitism among black students" and then went on to speak of "tensions" being caused by the Bakke decision and by "the Israeli-South African military relationship." Lerner, a veteran of the 1960s anti-war movement, came to the interview hoping to hear enough to allow him to support Jackson enthusiastically, but went away dismayed.

SOL STERN

Sol Stern is a New York writer.

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The paradoxes of Jesse Jackson.

BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

BY STANLEY CROUCH

JESSE JACKSON can do things no other politician of comparable stature can. He has ventured into areas of criticism only he could inhabit, unabashedly identifying problems of conduct that bedevil the Afro-American community and the greater urban community by extension. He has challenged Negroes to get off dope, to raise the babies they make, to stop being lackadaisical in school—to work their way out of problems rather than whine as they sullenly accept them. Any white politician so bold would be shouted down as a racist, or told that he or she didn't understand the dictates of Afro-American culture, which are supposedly so different from those of white culture.

When Jackson attacks the moral torpor that comes of greed, he means to encompass both the ruthless corporate mogul and the Negro dope dealer, one willing to destroy the environment for profit, the other an agent in the dissolution of community order, safety, and pride. His conception of "economic violence" is balanced by his sense of the violence done to urban life by urban dwellers, whom he does not let off the hook because they can plead poverty.

This is where Jackson is freshest and strongest: he returns responsibility to the poor and the victims of discrimination and thereby gives them a bittersweet kind of hope—a tragic ("no cross, no crown") but ultimately optimistic sense of engagement. This is very different from the buck-passing that has dominated political talk by black leaders, and it is also different from the usual tone of presidential candidates. Virtually every presidential candidate since John Kennedy has said that if he wins, you can lie down and go to sleep: he'll handle everything. As Jackson said to his audience in Hempstead, Long Island, during the New York primary, the president can't stop the consumption of drugs, irresponsible sexual behavior, or poor performance in school. He can't legislate against laziness or a lack of commitment to one's community.

But for all the light that the radiant reverend offers at this time in our history, there is an undeniable element of darkness, ice cold questions about his character and his methods, proof that he is a breathing idol who has, if not feet of clay, a good amount of thick mud on his shoes. Jesse Jackson is a man besmirched by his own conduct—by his raw ambition and his willingness to make pretzels of the truth. So many welcome and unwelcome things in one man are hard to reconcile.

As I've traveled with the Jackson campaign in recent months, the source of his oratorical power has become clear: he speaks to the disaffiliated and he reiterates the messianic myth. Whether he is a hero or not, Jackson has the *sound* of a hero; he fills the air with a timbre that makes flame audible. Somewhere down inside that timbre is the sting of reluctant weeping, a sound that gives voice to all those bored, enraged, and disillusioned by the alienation of racial paranoia and sex discrimination, of collective greed and paralyzing cynicism. When Jackson says, "My constituency is the desperate, the damned, the disinherited, the disrespected, and the despised," he is drawing on an accumulated association of moral mood that calls back to King, and even further, even deeper into our history. What we hear are the weights and textures of the charismatic style that came of African and European fusings of rhythm and spiritual dignity: the molten nobility of Negro religious emotion. That legacy speaks to all Americans; it is the spiritual tuning fork that has always brought the orchestra of domestic morality up to pitch.

As a symbol, Jackson represents the deep relationship of Afro-Americans to the actions and ideas that have expanded our sense of democracy. There is no area of political, economic, or personal concern that is not traversed by the Negro over the entire length of the national epic. As slaves, Afro-Americans were related in fundamental ways to the problems of exploited labor and even sexual harassment; as those denied the vote, equal treatment under the law, and freedom of choice, they illuminated the contradictions of discrimination in America. So the March on Washington in 1963 stretched its historical hand back to the coalitions of abolitionists and fighters for women's rights, and to the labor movement. On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial were gathered representatives of many who had at one time or another, in one way or another, been done wrong. They formed a rainbow coalition.

But that coalition was to be lost in a storm of xenophobia. Black nationalism sold out the populist dream of the civil rights movement as surely as Georgia's Tom Watson sold out post-Reconstruction populism and became, as C. Vann Woodward put it, "one of the outstanding exploiters of endemic Negrophobia." Fomenting separatist hysteria and charging headlong into exotica, black nationalists splintered the movement and set the tone for a fragmented social agenda. The obnoxious antipathy toward whites, foreshadowed when white workers were expelled from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and black power began to emerge, distorted the country's dialogue. One social movement after another became a separate cell. Jackson obliquely refers to this fragmentation

Stanley Crouch is a New York writer.

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when he says, "We are bringing the family back together. What we have is reunion. We forgive each other, redeem each other, regroup, and move on." This is Jackson's unmentioned agenda—the repudiation of black nationalism in its most racist and separatist extremes—and it is one reason he has more than meager appeal to a good number of whites, whether or not they would like to see him hold high elected office.

OBSERVING JACKSON'S campaign in Wisconsin, Arizona, Indiana, and New York, it was easy to see how little reporters understand about this country. Their assumptions about white racism were perforated in the voting booths, especially those of Wisconsin, where Jackson took almost a quarter of the white vote. They obviously knew less about white people than they presumed. The popularity of everyone from Bill Cosby to Michael Jackson and Michael Jordan went right by them. They seemed to have missed the fact that America has elected a good number of black mayors over the last two decades and that, as Pennsylvania Congressman Bill Gray has pointed out, half of the black members of Congress have mostly non-black constituents. Even the fact that Oprah Winfrey is frontrunner in the talk show race and that whites have become accustomed to seeing Negro men and women anchoring news programs across the nation didn't alert the press to changes in the racial sensibility of the country.

Seeing Jackson get an enthusiastic response from students at the University of Milwaukee took me back to the rallies of the '60s, but out in Janesville, where mostly white rural people gathered in a huge barn that had been used for hoedowns and jamborees, the response the reverend got was more telling. Parents held up children to see, blond teenage girls giggled over his good looks, skeptics were drawn in, and by the end of the address, the crowd was chanting, "Win, Jesse, win! Win, Jesse, win!" But perhaps the most startling example of how things have turned around in this country was in Kenosha, Wisconsin, at a United Auto Workers rally for Jackson. A middle-aged white woman on a metal crutch, her hair in Shirley Temple curls, wore a hooded white sweatshirt with the slogan, in red, green, and black letters, "Black To The Future."

In the bars and on the planes and buses, it was evident that Jackson's effect on people touched many of the reporters, despite their aversion to sentimentality. Even Secret Service men told me they had never seen anybody heat up rallies like Jackson—not Nixon, not Carter, not Reagan. Under the influence of a few drinks, reporters implied they were actually rooting for Jackson secretly (so secretly, sometimes, that it made their prose about him deadly). One of the reasons was that Jackson could deliver the same speech with the same authority over and over, sometimes making it come so alive that it seemed he was actually hearing it for the first time. Or he could improvise into a rhythm that would soften even the professionally hardboiled. The other candidates didn't do that. "Al Gore," said one cameraman, "gave the speech so much the same way every time that we could get our job down in a matter of days. George Bush? Dukakis? Oh, my God. Whatever else is going on with the reverend, he never lets you doze off, because he just *might* be spontaneous. You got to watch him. He's even that way with people. The Secret Service has to be ready for him to almost dive into crowds. When he gets that look in his eyes, he's going for the handshaking almost as fast as the idea comes to him. The reverend is good with the press and with the people because he's been courting celebrity for a long time. He's got it down."

But courting celebrity is much like the ritual dance of kissing the cobra's head—it demonstrates nerve and skill, but no matter how much finesse one brings to it, the danger of snake bite is ever present. Jackson was often nipped once he got to New York. Across the media, he was criticized for visiting and praising Castro, for ignoring human rights violations in leftist countries, and for not having enough experience to govern a nation.

The idea that he was treated delicately by the press because of his color—as both Edward Koch and Ronald Reagan suggested—simply doesn't hold water. In the March/April issue of *Extra!*, a leftist newsletter, there was an interesting comparison of the media's memory on the subjects of Reagan and Jackson. The article noted, among other things, that "nearly every significant piece on Jesse Jackson has contained the word 'anti-Semitism,' " whereas it is hard to find a profile of Reagan with the word "racism," even though he long opposed civil rights laws, once accused Negroes who moved into whites-only neighborhoods of trying "only to cause trouble," and blamed Martin Luther King's assassination partly on his civil disobedience. There are similar memory lapses on the part of the media when it comes to Koch. He isn't constantly reminded that he once said he felt most black people were anti-Semitic or that he once donned an Afro wig for a party with the press and sang, "Ain't Nobody's Business What I Do."

The tone of Koch's attacks on Jackson was so venomous that Albert Gore, the country boy who came to the big city well-heeled and left in a barrel, had to distance himself from the man who endorsed him; that columnist after columnist opened up on the mayor; and that many prominent Jews publicly took issue with him. Felix Rohatyn, for instance, made it clear that he resented Koch acting as the voice of the Jewish community, adding that as a man who had escaped the Nazis with false papers, he wasn't in need of instruction about anti-Semitism. He also noted that one doesn't choose a president on the basis of a single issue.

THOUGH JACKSON GAVE rousing, lyrical speeches and sustained his themes of common ground and bringing the family together, he didn't handle his demons well. He didn't confront issues with a heroism worthy of his rhetoric. His failure to meet with local Jewish leaders in Manhattan made him appear spooked. Instead, he left the task to his troops. Members of Jewish Americans for Jackson took on the Arafat issue, saying that Jackson's trip to talk with Arafat came at Sadat's request and was for the purpose of getting the PLO leader to renounce terrorism, recognize Israel's sovereignty, and bring about negotiation.

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Then a few days before the voting began, Jackson did an about-face on the question of negotiating and said he would not speak to the PLO, which gave the impression that he was running scared.

Lacking was the dramatic power Jackson needed, a power that might not have won him the Jewish vote but would have shown his determination to represent all the people. Had Jackson gone to a synagogue, put on a yarmulke, and prayed, he might have angered some of his followers who resentfully assumed that "the Jews want to string him up and make him kosher," but he would have put another mask over the many a Democratic candidate must wear. A ten-gallon hat in Texas, a hard hat with construction workers, a sombrero in California, a yarmulke in New York. Jackson's decision not to join the Manhattan parade celebrating Israel's 40th anniversary may have come at the behest of the Secret Service, but it still didn't look good.

Jackson just couldn't get it right. He allowed Spike Lee to direct a campaign commercial in which he looked like a cast member from *Dawn of the Dead*; he was dispirited and stiff, lacking the fire that had hopped up his audiences. In the wake of the "MacNeil/Lehrer" segment on his spotted past, Jackson didn't handle very well the questions it raised. On the Phil Donahue show, he held queries about the notorious bloody shirt incident at bay until time ran out, giving the impression he had something to hide, which he perhaps did.

THE NIGHT Dukakis won New York state and Jackson took the city, there was much gloom and anger in the ballroom of the Sheraton Hotel. The crowd was ready to turn livid. But that was not what happened. When Jackson came to the microphone he commended Dukakis for running a campaign that was clean and above the fray. He then said that a president must make America better, not bitter. "We cannot become cynical, we have come too far. We can't be pessimistic, we have come too far. From Rosa Parks in Montgomery, Alabama, to this ballroom, we have come a long ways. We must keep hope alive. We have come a long ways. We know this road. We will keep going. We must keep hope alive." And as he went on, the anger in the air dissipated.

I realized then that Jackson was often at his best when he had been defeated and, true to his prescriptions for blacks everywhere, fought off any temptation toward bitter self-pity. After the loss in Wisconsin, brooding in defeat, he stood on the plane, a sadness in his gaze: it was the look of a fighter who had been not pulverized but outpointed—and surprised by it, having been deceived by the sound of the crowd in his corner. But at the next stop he was true to form. He stood near his seat, waited for the reporters to step from the plane, put on his jacket, and came down onto the runway with Secret Service guards fore and aft. At the podium Jackson said that there had been no actual defeat because the right agenda was rising into plain sight, and the right moral tone was emerging. It was the talk of a poet, a mightily complex man who was continuing to prove that in a democracy you never know who the messenger will be.

By the end of the New York primary it was clear that Jackson would have a very difficult time getting to the White House—not because of race, not because of money, not even because of the gaffes here and there. He will be forever doomed by his determination to mythologize his life; the ghost of King and the stain of his blood would haunt Jackson all along the march to the Oval Office.

WHEN WE CONSIDER the space between what Jesse Jackson is and what he is saying, we are again eyeball to eyeball with the tragic dimensions of the man and of our history itself. Though he has exaggerated the poverty of his early life, though he appears still to be struggling with an inclination to grandstand, though he stubbornly refuses to admit to some of his whoppers, he is still someone the nation must use in a large way unless it wants to lose an extraordinary opportunity. Jackson is in process and—like Lyndon Johnson the ex-segregationist, Hugo Black the ex-Klansman, and a bevy of others who walked side by side with the Devil and left him later—he must not be counted out. If white men can grow, so can black men.

In Jackson we have a man who can speak across many gaps of communication, who can give many a sense of the nobility and the necessity of expelling the demons from themselves and from their communities. He can reach levels of such lyricism that the body politic itself seems some sort of poem still being born in heroic proportions. If America cannot use this man in some way, by fusing his colossal ambition with his ability to inspire involvement in the democratic process (in and out of the polling booth), then there is a problem of political immaturity in our time much greater than any we have admitted to thus far.

Jackson has exhibited acts of courage during this campaign that are not rivalled by any other candidates. When he spoke to over 5,000 black churchgoers in Milwaukee's Mecca Arena, the reverend challenged his audience by going on at length about his participation in the Gay Rights March. He knew well that most of them did not want to hear that. When he talked of embracing homosexuals who were dying, revulsion was in the air. But he persisted. It is not right, he said, it is not right. America can be better than that. Jackson didn't need to say what he did; that audience was his the moment they walked in the door. It was an act of true courage by a man determined to push his constituency beyond provincialism.

A man like this must be used for large tasks. He could be the one who forges the necessary alliances between Afro-American communities and the local police; the one who leads the war against drugs through the people themselves; the one who might so change the climate in poor neighborhoods that the goal of law and order becomes an inspiration to active engagement; the one who could instigate and mediate reform in the public schools, raising them to the position they should have in a democratic society. Jesse Jackson is a man whose obvious power should not be left outside the centers of policy nor be reduced to the threat of fragmenting the Democratic Party. He must be an empowered activist and nothing less. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Adventurers All

Rikky and Pete
(United Artists)
"Crocodile" Dundee II
(Paramount)
Willow
(MGM)

Marketing is a prime worry in the film world these days. Budgets have skyrocketed—the average cost of an American film is now $20 million, twice the 1981 average—and the entertainment market is thronged with competition. Other films compete not only for the audience but for the very theaters where a film is showing; and there's enormous non-filmic competition, including free TV. A new picture has to be launched well and quickly, if it's going to be launched at all. The field is littered with failed films—some of them good, others at least salable—that weren't sold well. A recent example is the subtle, evocative *Housekeeping*. The trailer made it look like a corny rehash of *You Can't Take It with You*.

Admittedly, however, the marketers sometimes face tough problems. A new one is an Australian film called *Rikky and Pete*. The ad for it is a huge photo of a dusty Bentley crossing a desert with a young man sitting cross-legged on the roof holding two straps. Under the title is the line "a fast moving comedy," and over the title is the catch-line "The things we do / to prove we can do / the things we do." The ad isn't misleading: it doesn't lead at all. I was glad I'd already seen the film, but having seen it, I sympathized with the marketers' difficulty—trying to summarize in one image and a few words a wry, sidewise comedy about an Australian sister and brother in their 20s who leave their posh Melbourne home to strike north for freedom from their dominating father and then, of course, have adventures.

Those adventures are mostly amusing, as is most of the dialogue (allowing for a few patches of impenetrable Australian accent). But the chief attribute of David Parker's screenplay is its world within a world. It's apparent very early that Rikky and Pete are living in a film, and this feeling increases as they leave home on their hegira. I don't mean overt symbolism of any kind, only that here we have a sister and a brother who look like ordinary people in ordinary circumstances and who get involved in matters that could happen only in Movieland. From the moment we see Stephen Kearney, as Pete, delivering newspapers with a Rube Goldberg contraption of his design that Harold Lloyd might have invented, we know we are in the cozy middle ground between realism and fantasy that films have made their own. Rikky, played by Nina Landis, is given her share of Movieland stuff: she is a geologist, and up north she discovers a mine whose lode lasts just long enough to let her sell it to some bad guys. The girlfriend whom Pete finds up north, a fetching Filipina named Tetchie Agbayani, is that familiar male-fantasy creation, a generously available beauty who has a heart of gold and who flips for the hero on sight.

Add such elements as a born-again evangelist crossing the desert in a car stuck in first gear, and a lot of further inventions by Pete, including a walking crane that helps in a jailbreak, and the result is one of those comedies that engage less through laughter than by amused suspension of disbelief. The unobtrusive direction by Nadia Tass does nothing to impair the film's journey through Movieland.

Now try to imagine a way to put the quintessence of all the above in one poster image—easy to do with most film merchandise—and your sympathy goes to the people trying to sell *Rikky and Pete*. Along with wishes for good luck.

There was an old joke, probably defunct by now, about a man who wouldn't go to hear Beethoven's Seventh because he'd missed the first six. Unlike that man, I went to see *"Crocodile" Dundee II* even though . . .

As everyone knows from *C. Dundee I* and from TV spots, the hero is Australian. In *C. Dundee II*, after a stay in New York, he goes back home. Like its dad (I'm told), this is a comedy adventure, and *II* is at its best—which is to say, its most bearable—when it kids itself and its genre. As against *Rikky and Pete*, which is stratospheres above it in wit and in charm of improbability, *II* plunges deep into Movieland, paddling mechanically to stay there.

The one interesting aspect of the film is Paul Hogan, Dundee himself, the lean Australian beer and tourism salesman. He is now riding high in what is usually considered a young man's game—incessant physical derring-do and taciturn sex appeal—yet Hogan is almost 50. (His son is co-author of this script.) Good luck to him, too, but now that I know what he does besides selling beer and tourism, goodbye.

F. H. LaGuardia, late and still lamented mayor of New York, uttered at least one deathless remark: "When I make a mistake, it's a beaut." What helped us to live with his (relatively few)

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Mass Is Ended. Nanni Moretti, Italian screenwriter-director-star, has made five features. This is his first to be released here—a warm comedy-drama about a young priest's vocational troubles. (Reviewed 5/30/88)

A Taxing Woman. Literally true—it's about a woman tax inspector in Tokyo. The script wobbles a bit, but it's well acted and very brightly directed. (5/2/88)

White Mischief. Kenya, 1941. Sex, scandal, murder among dissolute British aristos. The high comic style makes it almost Waugh fare. (4/11/88)

Wings of Desire. A rarity—a film that might be more rewarding to read than it is to see. Peter Handke's rich screenplay—about an angel seeking to become mortal in Berlin—seems constrained by Wim Wenders's direction. (5/23/88)

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mistakes was his knowledge that he had made them and would learn from them. What makes George Lucas's mistakes harder to bear—what keeps them from being "beauts"—is his apparent obtuseness about them.

Lucas's last film, *Howard the Duck*, was so stupid that it could have been made only by a financially independent producer, free of obligation to advisers. His new production, *Willow* (written by Bob Dolman from Lucas's story, directed by Ron Howard), is not as stupid as *Howard*, it's just dull, clumsy, and misconceived. *Willow* is a fairy tale, with a wicked queen and her mistakenly loyal daughter, an abandoned baby, and a valiant knight who fights to straighten things out. Trite as all these elements are, it's the attempt at the unusual that sinks the venture. The title character is a dwarf, and we see him as husband and father in a community of dwarfs.

Willow befriends the abandoned baby, and his pilgrimage with the infant brings about the plot. The idea of using dwarfs as the center of sympathy simply doesn't function in a live-action picture. The idea might have worked (has worked) in an animated film, where temperings of various kinds are possible and where human beings who happen to be dwarfs aren't asked to behave as if they were unaware of it.

Lucas and his sometime partner Steven Spielberg have made their names and fortunes as Innocents—Hansel and Hansel in the Hollywood forest. When each is at his best, alone or with the other—*American Graffiti*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*—they make films with the ingenuity and self-confidence of children.

But, as the most adoring parent knows, children can become tiresome. When the innocence loses its singular, freshened insight, when it becomes in a sense self-centered, children become boring. It's too late, and possibly irrelevant, to expect Lucas to grow up. But since he apparently operates by childlike instinct rather than adult plan, we have to hope that this instinct regains its former clarity.

EDWARD ROTHSTEIN ON MUSIC

The Dada of Us All

Virgil Thomson has always seemed to risk meriting the verdict he once bestowed on a colleague: "The career is more interesting than the music." For though a list of his works fills up three dense pages in the American Grove Dictionary, and though he is accorded mention in nearly any short roster of important American composers, how much of his music has made its way into the repertory? How many of the most avid concertgoers and record buyers have heard any particular work more than once? How many of our most literate listeners can be said to have more than a casual acquaintance with even a handful of his works?

As for the career, now in its seventh decade of fearless and frank and cheerful expression, it has been spiced with more than ordinary charm and honor. Born just before the turn of the century, Thomson was baptized by high modernism. He studied with Nadia Boulanger in the Paris of the 1920s, as did Copland, Harris, and an array of other American composers aspiring to find their native voices on foreign soil. He socialized with a generation of artists and writers in Paris: Joyce and Pound and Gertrude Stein and Cocteau, Picasso and Christian Bérard and Maurice Grosser.

He mixed with the avant-garde theater crowd of New York in the mid-'30s, when John Houseman and Orson Welles were fresh-faced iconoclasts. And he settled, during the war and postwar years, into a grand middle age as music critic for the *New York Herald Tribune*, where his criticism infuriated precisely the people it should have, while setting standards for newspaper criticism that have yet to be matched. By the time he retired from daily criticism in 1954, he had become the senior intellectual observer of the musical scene. His autobiography, written in 1966, could presume upon the reader's acquaintance and curiosity about the dazzling career; it merely bore the title *Virgil Thomson*.

Now we have a volume of correspondence, *Selected Letters of Virgil Thomson* (Summit Books, 413 pp., $24.95), which completes the canonization of a career. It begins with letters home from the medical detachment of the 129th Field Artillery at Camp Doniphan in Oklahoma, where the young Virgil was stationed in 1917 ("You mustn't believe anything you read in the newspapers about Camp Doniphan; it is all faked. Such stories and rumors we call here 'latrine wireless.' "), and ends with a 1985 note to a friend with ten rules, well tested by Thomson, about how a composer should promote his career (". . . 7. Make friends among composers. Be a good colleague. 8. It helps to teach a little; pupils make good fans. 9. Writing about music is also valuable. . . ."). These letters, selected and annotated from a collection of 25,000 by Tim Page and Vanessa Weeks Page, are in the shadow of the classic autobiography, which drew recollections from the most substantial of these documents, filling them out with mordant commentary. Moreover, either by editorial judgment or authorial choice, the letters seem to float Thomson in some vague social jello where few of his correspondents bear any clear relation to each other; lovers, close friends, and strangers become nearly interchangeable recipients of Thomson's prose.

But the volume does contain an invaluable collection of sharp-tongued letters to readers from Thomson's years at the *Herald Tribune*, and it offers something his other more considered writings may not: a record of a temperament and style that has much to do with Thomson's music as well as his career. That style is idiosyncratically direct, presenting an almost notational record of passing moments, mention of books read, people seen, meals cooked and eaten. The temperament is just as unadorned: "I've no plan or intuition for the future," writes the 29-year-old composer. "I shall practice my trade. If I practice it competently, I shall make money. Some, at least." These abrupt phrasings of fact can even turn out to be quite melodic. "All life is good now," he writes the following year. "Nothing exigent. Only simple behaving and quiet working and no thinking to speak of."

The belief behind that simplicity is hard to characterize. There is never any bitterness. There is hardly a hint of what the autobiography refers to as his "*pessimisme américain*." The letters also omit any explanation of what he calls, in one cryptic letter, his "turbulent and unhappy mind." It may be because this unhap-

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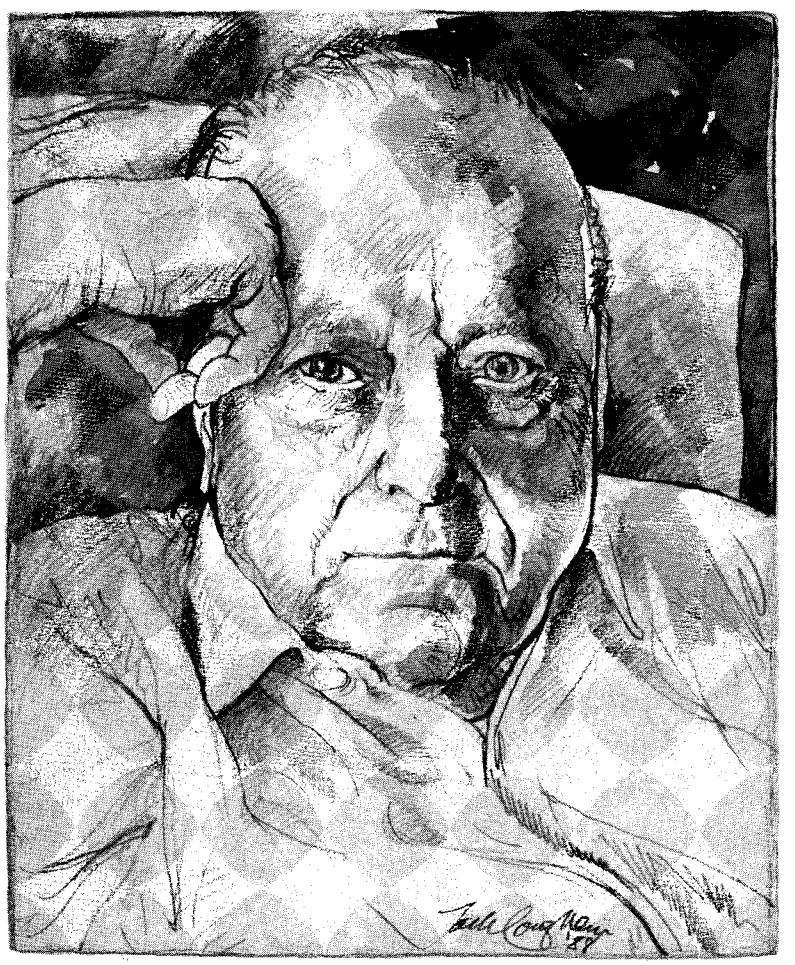
piness—and the early years of financial struggle and career setbacks—seems to be eminently erasable. "The world is blank and lovely as a clean blackboard," Thomson writes at a better moment during his apprentice years. And even when filled, it is as easily apprehended. "Language, to me, is merely for telling the truth about something," he wrote in the autobiography, and the truth about something is a matter of evidence rather than excavation: it is there to be read in the surrounding scene, lying open and apparent, on the surface. There is no esoteric mysticism about life or art, nor any ponderousness about its passing and its practice. It simply is what it is, a peculiar mixture of private and public, touching inwardness and calculated manipulation. "One is always interrupting some really poignant emotion to go to bed or lunch."

There is a certain impersonality in this gaze that reads the world. For it seemed as if Thomson presented only his own surface in return. Thomson notes in one letter that Boulanger complained to him: "In spite of the fact that I am acquainted with you as a talented musician, a charming person, and an incredibly intelligent young man, I have the feeling of not knowing you at all inside." But this impersonality is not a coldness; it is a matter of taste. He complained about Boulanger's: "Her lack of comprehension of everything that is vivid or simple is complete." And Thomson's simplicity was uncompromising. What made it affecting was an undercurrent of a quiet sentiment that vaguely resembled nostalgia. Its musical analogue might be a subtly melancholic harmonizing of a simple hymn tune. Such undercurrents are few and far between in these letters, indications of love and feeling muted by propriety of one kind or another.

The letters seem spontaneous and unmediated sketches, like Thomson's "Musical Portraits," which he began writing in Paris and still writes today. A figure sits for such a portrait just as for a painter, and Thomson writes a composition based on the sensations received—the physical and spiritual aura of that person at that moment. Musical portraits exist of nearly every friend and artist Thomson came across; those I have heard are wry, compact, subtly various, unself-conscious, crystalline.

The letters, in fact, do not suggest only the portraits, they suggest the musical style in general—at least the style I know from the small number of Thomson's works now commonly available. In 1921 he writes back home about the French landscape; it seemed "like French art, simple and plain, clear, and always delightful with the same delicately varied monotony." This could almost become an aesthetic ideal. Thomson writes to a correspondent curious about Boulanger: "Nadia made me understand that writing music was like writing a letter. All you had to do was to say what you had to say clearly and stop."



DRAWING BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

This notion of composition as a form of correspondence, making no claim to the religion of art or aesthetic hermeticism, was a dissent from the Central European tradition—and it was one reason why Boulanger may have had such an impact on young American composers seeking a native style. Thomson, though, was more radical than most of Boulanger's other pupils, taking this message literally. While Copland could begin by writing music that aped the Germanic style, Thomson seemed to have begun straightforwardly and never wavered. His compositional career does not "develop" or evolve any more than his individual compositions do.

Music, for Thomson, is simply a part of ordinary discourse; it could make free use of all materials at hand—including popular song and dance. It also was written to be heard by particular listeners of his own time and place, not for some transcendent judge of beauty and truth. If so much of Thomson's music has remained unpublished and unheard, it is, paradoxically, because this particular vision of music had so little influence among the power structures that grew up around modern music. ("I was clearly not grist either for the French immortality-mill or for international snob-bohemia.") In his autobiography, Thomson attributes his failure to be adopted by one or another of such groups to his "frankness"—his undiplomatic comments about colleagues' compositions and their value. But it is also because in such compositions as the "Sonata da chiesa" and the symphonies of these early years, there is so little "success-rhetoric," as he said of Satie, so little demand or command that these compositional "morceaux" should become part of something as stolid as "repertory."

This aesthetic, at its cartoonish extreme, can become anti-intellectual, eclectic to the point of postmodernism. But Thomson was too acute a thinker and

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listener to go that far; he required the context of high modernism for his own approach to seem so vital and light-headed. It would be a mistake to see Thomson as a sort of mock-innocent, plainspeaking composer, homey and charming, invoking his American hymns and simple counterpoint. There is a more critical aspect as well, an aggression against the musical scene, though Thomson's mockery is continuously sublimated into play. "Koussevitzky refused my symphony cold," he writes to Gertrude Stein in 1927. "I was a little surprised. I knew it was pretty good, but hadn't really imagined it that good." Thomson's music had a particular audience in mind—not the bourgeois listener of the concert hall or mainstream repertory, but a member of his own class; and that listener would have shared his attitudes as well, a sophisticated irony aimed at his origins, an opposition mixed with deep affection.

THIS COULD come very close to Dadaism, which for Thomson was once "an ethical ideal," being relentlessly "frivolous" and "resistant to being governed." In 1927 Thomson divided up Paris into two representative camps, one consisting of Bérard, Joyce, and Antheil, whose taste ran to pictorial explication and demonstrative emotion, and the other of Tchelitcheff, Stein, and himself, whose focus was "play, construction, interest centered in the material, nonsense, magic, and automatic writing." This was a metaphysical division—too artificially made—that Thomson saw dividing the culture: "Between knowledge and wisdom. Between the tabloid newspaper and Mother Goose. Between culture and anarchy. The law and the prophets. Kant and Spinoza. Duty and pleasure." Wisdom, Mother Goose, anarchy, the prophets, Spinoza, and pleasure all aligned with Thomson. It is surely an alliance that could have led as easily to banality as to charm; the music was saved from dissolution by what Thomson once described as the "discipline of spontaneity."

The apotheosis of this discipline was the opera *Four Saints in Three Acts*, written with Stein in 1927-28. ("We got on like Harvard men," Thomson writes.) "The theme we chose," Thomson later explained, "was of my suggesting; it was the working artist's working life, which is to say, the life we both were living." It was also to be about the "religious life"—"peace between the sexes, community of faith, the production of miracles." The result was a sort of ecstatic volubility, an outpouring of verbal play and liturgical allusion. The plot is an accumulation of images, with one act consisting of seven tableaux, including visions of various saints being photographed or serenaded with a guitar, lost in ecstasy or dreaming of children. The words themselves are in the best Stein manner ("The difference between saints forget-me-nots and mountains have to have to have to at a time"). Even the stage directions were sung. I have never seen the work staged, nor heard the early recording conducted by Thomson, but the recent recording by Nonesuch grew out of a concert presentation I did see, and the work, which on paper stupefies, in performance intoxicates. There is never a hint of irony or expressionism or decay or dissolution. All is forthright and cheerful, the work of Americans playing abroad; it is an expression of a very particular attitude.

The attitude aggressively dissolves all attempts at categorization and restriction; it is "avant-garde" in the typical way, but its urge to shock is accompanied by an urge to amaze and to play. Such an urge must have also lain behind Thomson's then radical decision to cast the work using only black singers when it received its premiere in Hartford in 1934, though he attributed his choice only to matters of diction and timbre.

The iconoclasm is built into the work. There are questions of number throughout: "How much of it is finished?" "How many saints are there in it?" "Could four acts be three?" It turns out that the four saints number over 30, the three acts, four. The work will permit no logical or numerical constriction. Thomson wrote: "If through the poet's liberties with logic and the composer's constant usage of the simplest formulas in our musical vernacular, something is evoked of the inner gayety and mystical strength of lives consecrated to a non-material end, the authors will consider their message to have been communicated." The work turns Dadaist impulses into transcendental ones, insisting on the spiritual element of play. "When this you see remember me" are the words to the opera's final communion hymn; the opera canonizes itself with sly innocence.

Thomson has been able to continue this opera's balancing act throughout his career, staying always on the margins of the repertory, while easily seducing music culture's more literate representa-

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tives. But it is a pose full of risk; it required a combination of ennui and innocence. Even the collaboration with Stein was risky; the pair did not speak for several years, for reasons this collection's notes leave mysterious but that are explained in the autobiography. The quarrel was over matters of loyalty and allegiance, which this vision of the spiritual and aesthetic life omits. This artist's life is a fantasy that even its fantasists could not sustain.

By the time Thomson's second opera with Stein, *The Mother of Us All*, was composed in the late '40s, the delicate balance had already begun to turn. It has been hailed as his masterpiece, with its schematic account of Susan B. Anthony's struggle for the women's vote; its rural American music invokes what Thomson called "gospel hymns and cocky marches . . . sentimental ballads, waltzes, darned-fool ditties, and intoned sermons." But Stein seemed to have written this libretto knowing she would die before ever seeing it; the text bristles with hard-edged animosity, with Susan B. becoming a stand-in for Gertrude herself, expressing with a literal clarity her scorn for men, who are referred to as "animals" and "brutes," noting that the production of children depended on the "rather horrible" link between men and women. She even seemed to demand homage from her composer-colleague; the libretto ends with a character, Virgil T., unveiling a statue of Susan B. Anthony. Thomson's music treats these aspects with as much sympathy as possible, with the villains coming off cocky, the finale even becoming a sort of elegy for Stein, but the play of *Four Saints* has here turned deadly serious, with devils in the act. This is an opera not about the artist's life but about the demands of devotion and power, demands that the music refuses to address.

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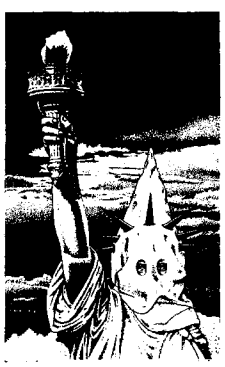

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THE MUSICAL achievement of Virgil Thomson has been to elude those demands, to continue composing, up to the present moment, with simplicity and care, not straying from the path first chosen in the '20s. This has not been a musical career strewn with success—apart from years when his influence as critic was at its peak. Thomson's recent opera, *Lord Byron*, is a case in point. It was commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera, which characteristically chickened out after it was delivered; the work was performed in New York in 1985 at Juilliard, but it has never been recorded (and I have yet to hear it). But even in Thomson's greatest successes, his unwavering commitment to his early aesthetic condemns him to a marginal grandeur. His music is ironically too sincere for the contemporary temperament.

But the grander irony of the career is that Thomson did move into the heart of the 20th-century musical scene—through criticism. By standing outside of the musical power structure, he could regard it all with a seigneurial detachment tinged with an air of disfranchisement, which gave his criticism precisely the right mixture of disinterestedness and passion. His 1939 book *The Musical Scene* (excerpted in *The Virgil Thomson Reader*) dissected the sociology of the musical scene, demonstrating the relative isolation of the contemporary composer with the metaphor of an "island home." The virtuosic heart of the book was the linking of musical style to the source of a composer's income—whether it comes from a rich spouse or government commissions, teaching or royalties. The motivation for the internal workings of music becomes material, but this is no crude Marxism. His analysis of the embattled avant-gardist, subsidized by the world he attacks, is withering:

> Composers living on subsidies personal or impersonal tend to write introspective music of strained harmonic texture and emphatic instrumental style. They occasionally write very long pieces. They are not much bothered about charm, elegance, sentiment, or comprehensibility, though they are seldom deliberately hermetic. . . . Appearing to be persecuted is, of course, their way of earning their living. The minute they lose the air of being brave men downed by circumstances, they cease to get free money.

The analysis of styles in the book is scathing: an exposé of the influence of commerce in a world that pretends to be beyond it. Thomson himself—living off small doles, begging a thousand here, five hundred there—never had any illusions about his own claims. The nostalgic element in Thomson's music, in fact, is absolutely sincere, a longing for a period in which the relationship between the composer, the music, and the listener was intimate and direct, when patronage was (or at least imagined to be) a support rather than a constraint. Thomson's own music is a form of refuge. It is directed to the individual listener in order to escape the commands of the audience, taking on idiosyncratic forms to avoid the demands of the art market.

His stand as a critic is more engaged: he was a representative of composers' interests, sending missives from their island home to the world of musical commerce. He later summarized the goals he took on as critic from 1940-54:

> To expose the philanthropic persons in control of our musical institutions for the amateurs they are, to reveal the manipulators of our musical distribution for the culturally retarded profit makers that indeed they are, and to support with all the power of my prose every artist, composer, group, or impresario whose relation to music was straightforward, by which I mean based only on music and the sound it makes.

Where newspaper criticism had become mannered and tied to the interests of the music world it covered, where passions had become muted and vision blinded, Thomson came onstage ready for a fight: at stake was the survival of play itself. He referred to the "silk-underwear music" of Heifetz ("If I ever heard luxury expressed in music it was there") and the "dull and brutal" playing of the New York Philharmonic. He attacked the management network in New York and the meretricious claims of Germanic musical taste.

And though Thomson's reviews are

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uneven, and his coverage of new music idiosyncratic, his was no mean achievement—the outsider become arbiter. To judge from the correspondence, the letters that came in were precisely those that still come in to newspaper critics who offend interests or accepted proprieties of homage, but Thomson knew how to reply without ever becoming engaged, pulling the rug out from opponents by refusing to join them in standing on it. To the reader who expressed distaste over Thomson's presence on the scene, he replied, "The intensity of your feelings on all these matters is proof of their sincerity and I hope that you will not take my occasional violence of expression as anything essentially different." And to the reader who simply cursed him, he responded, "You should really not use such language in front of my secretary, who is a lady, and who opens my mail."

These answers, and others with more substance, become part of a persona we know again from the music: the gentility and wit are genuine, but no one should doubt they are also strategic. Thomson is never as innocent as he appears, and he grants nobody else that innocence either. This has given his career bite and character and calculation; his music is the Dadaist complement to that life, often lovely, disorienting, heartfelt, but never able to take its innocence seriously.

THE POLITICS OF PATHOS

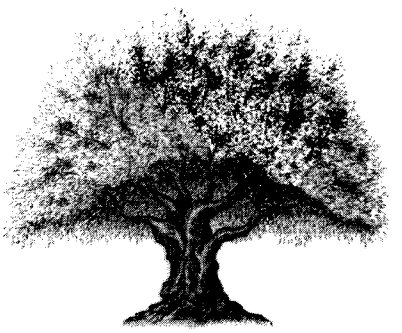
The Yellow Wind
by David Grossman
translated from the Hebrew by Haim Watzman

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 216 pp., $17.95)

> We have lived for 20 years in a false and artificial situation, based on illusions, on a teetering center of gravity between hate and fear, in a desert void of emotion and consciousness, and the passing time turns slowly into a separate, forbidding entity hanging above us like a suffocating layer of yellow dust. From this point of view, nothing matches the occupation as a great personal challenge. As a personal crossroads demanding action and thought. Sometimes you can gain in this way—for a split second—real mountain air.
>
> Albert Camus said that this passage from speech to moral action has a name. "To become human." During the last weeks, and seeing what I saw, I wondered more than once how many times during the last 20 years I had been worthy of being called human, and how many people among the millions participating in this drama are worthy of it.

With these words David Grossman concludes his report of his journey to the West Bank, written in the spring of 1987, many months before the Palestinians in that territory did Israel the favor of returning its attention to their hold upon its fate. These concluding words convey the spirit of Grossman's book: the eloquence that slips into rhetoric; the air of startlement, of personal discovery, the *vrai naïf* quality; the moral urgency, and the insistence upon measuring history by ethics; the sincerity; the absence of a voice that is hard to forget. The appeal to Camus, moreover, is dispiriting, if it is Camus on Algeria that Grossman has in mind. *The Yellow Wind* is a valuable, flabby book. It will introduce its readers not only to the intractability of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also to some of the most significant shortcomings of a large portion of the Israeli left, of which *The Yellow Wind* is a representative document: the aversion to politics, the enchantment with pathos, the confusion of words with deeds, the surprise about unreason.

Grossman is a young Israeli writer with a growing reputation, whose stories, collected in *The Jogger*, and first novel, *The Smile of the Lamb*, more or less introduced the occupied territories into Israeli fiction. He is not a writer in the grip of a passion, or an obsession, or a vision of the world; he is having, instead, a career. His books move from subject to subject, from style to style, with intelligence, but also with a certain superfluity. In 1987 Grossman was asked by the clever, lively weekly *Koteret Rashit*, a liberal magazine with little patience for liberalism, to travel the West Bank, and on the occasion of the 20th



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anniversary of its conquest, to write it up. Grossman traveled for seven weeks, and wrote. When his essay appeared in the magazine (it was enlarged into the book), it created a sensation.

I AM NOT sure why. I would like to believe that it was not because Grossman brought news. After all, Israel has ruled the West Bank for two decades; the Palestinians should hardly have been strange. I suspect, though, that they were strange, not only to many of the book's readers, but to its author, too. Grossman writes a little like a tourist in his own world. His book, and its reception, are a measure of the extent to which the first two decades of the occupation of the West Bank were distinguished, on the Israeli side, by denial (which was partly premised, on the Palestinian side, by docility). If *The Yellow Wind* is a sign that the denial is dying, then a blessing on the book. The Other has been found. Not a moment too soon.

Grossman's account is brief, but comprehensive. He talks to Arabs and Jews, Israeli Arabs and Palestinian Arabs, refugees and settlers and radicals and soldiers. He is a good listener, and a careful painter of pictures: an eye accompanied by a conscience. Occasionally, as in his portrait of an Israeli security agent he calls Gidi, Grossman's reportage is beautifully heightened by his novelist's gift. It is the Palestinians, not the Israelis, who really fascinate him. His narratives of his encounters with Palestinians seem scrupulous. He penetrates, but he does not presume; he is fascinated (like a good liberal) by the fact of enmity, and by its forms; he is, above all, attentive.

What did Grossman discover about the Palestinians? Their misery ("Life in the camp is bad. . . . You are always with your head down, waiting for the next blow. After a few years there you have nothing left but fear and poverty. You become like a dead person: you do not want anything and you do not hope. You wait for death. Even the children there are old"), and their pride ("We must educate ourselves, in opposition to what the occupation wants us to be. The occupation can numb, and we must fight that numbness. That is our mission. There are those among us who fight with weapons, and there are those who fight with speeches. We will fight with the help of education and thought"). Most strikingly of all, however, Grossman discovered their extremism.

In a Palestinian school in Deheisha, a refugee camp, Grossman asks a kindergarten teacher for her view of Arafat, and is told: "We are against Arafat, because Arafat wants peace. We want a solution by force. What was taken by force will be returned by force. Only thus." Then he asks Naima, a four-year-old girl, "Do you know who the Jews are?" "The army," she replies. "Are there other Jews?" "No." Then a little Palestinian boy pretends to shoot the inquiring Israeli with a stick:

> He runs to the teacher, peeks at me from behind her arm, and laughs. He is two years old.
>
> "Who do you want to shoot?" the teachers ask, smiling, like two mothers taking pride in a smart child.
>
> "Jews."
>
> Their lips make out the answer with him.
>
> "Now tell him why," they encourage the little one.
>
> "Because the Jews took my uncle," he says. . . .
>
> "Is this the answer, to bring up another generation and another in hatred? To teach them that this hatred justifies the refusal to work toward a solution? Couldn't you try, maybe, another way?"
>
> "There is no other way," they answer.

THE EMOTIONAL evolution of the Palestinian community during the uprising has certainly heightened this hostility. There are moderates, of course, who understand the practical necessity, and in some cases also the moral requirement, that the Palestinians coexist with Israel. But many of these people are either silenced by fear or caught up in the exaltation with which the Palestinians in the occupied territories are evading real politics. A few months ago *Koteret Rashit* published a troubling series of interviews with Palestinians; the verbal violence was extraordinary. (In some instances, it was murderously anti-Semitic.) The Palestinians are dreaming, beyond any doubt, of all of Palestine.

Grossman, a man of the left, does not broach the problem that Palestinian maximalism would seem to represent for Israeli moderation. His silence has the effect of abetting the idea, upon which the Israeli right is growing fat, that "their" maximalism must be met with "our" maximalism. In fact, Israeli moderation is not based only upon Palestinian moderation. It is based upon Israel's strength (the state's diplomacy is premised on the state's power, which a political solution will hardly slacken), and Israel's interests (Israel will not survive as a democracy, or as a Jewish state, or as a decent society, if it absorbs or administers well over a million Palestinians), and a sense of justice, and a bruised hope. It does not matter that the Palestinians are dreaming of everything, since they will never be allowed the power, not by Israel and not by Jordan, to get everything. Even PLO intellectuals who argue for a Palestinian state have depicted it demilitarized (and confederated with Jordan). What matters is what the Palestinians will settle for, not what they will fantasize about.

THE SIGNS, as usual, are ambiguous. I refer not only to the old disparity between Arafat's dovish whispers and Arafat's hawkish cries. Consider, for example, Walid Khalidi's "Toward Peace in the Holy Land," in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs*. Khalidi is a Palestinian scholar at Harvard, by all accounts a reasonable man, whose *From Haven to Conquest*, an anthology of documents about "Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948," which first appeared in 1971 and has recently been reprinted by the Institute for Palestine Studies, has been used with profit by students of the conflict on both sides of the conflict. "Just as Israel is a reality which the Palestinians and the PLO must accept," writes Khalidi, "Palestinian nationhood is a reality which Israel must accept. As Israel is here to stay, the Palestinians are here to stay, too." Golden words. But then Khalidi apologizes for the decision of the 18th meeting of the Palestine National Congress in April 1987 to renege on Arafat's (anyway sotto voce) interest in United Nations Resolution 242: "The Congress's rejection of the resolution was reasoned rather than categorical," Khalidi writes, in a Palestinian kind of *pilpul*, not quite in the independent voice of the intellectual.

It is only a categorical affirmation of 242, however, a simple, unequivocal, plain as day, declarative statement of Israel's right to exist, and of the Palestinian preparedness to coexist with it, that will coax Israel to concessions. Khalidi writes admirably of "pragmatism," and admiringly of "the political light-years traveled by the Arab countries in the direction of pragmatism." In his politics, he seems resigned to Israel's survival, and to its security. In his history, however, he does not. He repeats the old canard that Israel is "the reborn Crusader kingdom of medieval times" (you do not coexist with Crusader kingdoms,

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you destroy them), and refers to 1948 and 1967 without so much as a mention of the Arab determination to wipe out the Jews (the dates mark, for him, only Israeli irredentism), and praises the Palestinian uprising for its "Masada-like poignancy." Masada! It is Masada that inspires the Israeli mentality that is proudly callous toward the Palestinians. Is this what Palestinians should learn from Jews? Is Khalidi not aware that Masada was a black hour in Jewish history, the morbid logical conclusion of Jewish zealotry, the chilling antithesis of pragmatism, the apotheosis of a *jusqu'au-boutisme* that was the Jewish contribution to the immolation of the Jewish commonwealth?

NATIONALISMS, of course, are usually radical. But sometimes, when they run into reality, and the maximum is measured against the misery, pragmatism may modify nationalism. This was the case with Jewish nationalism. Many of the Zionists who brilliantly, and at the cost of splitting their national movement, accepted the idea of partition in the 1930s and 1940s certainly did not mean to deny the Jewish right to the land in its entirety; there are no rights except to the whole. They took what they could get, rather, because the nation had to be lifted from its long night. (Once there were Jews in refugee camps, too.) And they dreamed on; but never, between 1949 and 1967, never was an Israeli army sent across the border in the name of a Jewish dream. (Since 1977, however, Israel has been governed almost continuously by Zionists who were opposed to partition, who have tried to transform the defensive conquest of the West Bank by Israeli soldiers into the offensive conquest of the West Bank by Israeli planners and settlers, who take dreams for programs.)

This, the ability to renounce the purity of the collective dream under pressure of the collective pain, is what Palestinian nationalism should learn from Jewish nationalism. Grossman draws a different analogy between Palestinians and Jews. For example:

> The Palestinians, as is well known, are making use of the ancient Jewish strategy of exile and have removed themselves from history. They close their eyes against harsh reality . . . . "Next year in Jerusalem," said the Jews in Latvia and in Cracow and in San'a, and the meaning was that they were not willing to compromise. . . . And here also, again and again, that absolute demand: everything. Nablus and Hebron and Jaffa and Jerusalem. And in the meantime—nothing.

Or:

> Somehow one senses that people here have turned themselves voluntarily into doubles of the real people who once were, in another place. Into people who hold in their hands only one real asset: the ability to wait.
>
> And I, as a Jew, can understand that well.

Or:

> And on the roof of one of those houses sits a boy, 12 years old perhaps, head shaved and eyes closed, and he plays devotedly on a comb wrapped in paper. Fiddler on the roof.

And so on. For Grossman, in short, the Palestinians are the Jews of the Middle East.

The Other has been found, and turns out to be the Same. This sentimentalization is one of the oldest and silliest platitudes about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The analogy is insulting to the Palestinians. Must they be like the Jews to arouse interest? The analogy is also insulting to the Jews. The Jews, finally, returned themselves to history. The Jews, finally, compromised. The Jews, finally, took only a part. The Jews, finally, tired of waiting, and saved themselves.

DAVID GROSSMAN is blunt about a lack of interest in politics. "When I left on this journey, I decided not to talk with Jewish or Arab politicians or officials. Their positions are well known to the point of weariness. I wanted to meet the people who are themselves the real players in the drama." The impulse is easy to forgive. The "peace process" has become a small industry, even when there is no peace process. Diplomats and professors please themselves with the refinement of formulas and options and scenarios and slogans that amount to an intellectual insulation against the brutality of their subject. Grossman's insistence that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not, as the analysts would say, "top-down," but "bottom-up," that it is determined by the actions of ordinary people taking history into their own hands (the Middle East must have a higher density of such people than anywhere in the world), is correct. Moreover, his willingness to enter the sinister scene without the certainty that he will leave it with a program is the mark of an honest man.

And yet the Israeli-Palestinian problem *is* political. (Except for the chiliasts

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on both sides, whom Grossman rightly detests.) The conditions that Grossman deplores are the result of politics. The solutions that Grossman will certainly welcome will be the result of politics. I understand the suspension of politics for the purpose of understanding. I do not understand the failure to return to politics with what has been understood. Grossman has immersed himself in one of the most perilous political situations in the world, and refuses to think a political thought. He is satisfied with what he calls "wide-hearted humanism," with Camus's commandment to "become human."

A FEW YEARS ago Amos Oz published *In the Land of Israel*, an account of his journeys through the Israel of the early 1980s, which is the immediate predecessor of Grossman's book. Oz's extraordinary reportage included the text of a talk in defense of tolerance that he gave to the citizens of Ofra, one of the largest and most interesting settlements on the West Bank. Oz has a Camus-like gift of liberal eloquence, and his speech was a small epiphany of contemporary liberalism. And yet it does not suffice as a reply to the settlers. They come, after all, in the name of God, and Zionism, and Jewish history, and messianism, and the Holocaust, and the pioneering spirit, in the name of symbols and experiences and archetypes and superstitions that are the stuff of every Jewish consciousness. Against these things, sweet reason will lose.

For a start, liberalism enters the fray, when it enters the fray, with a philosophical disadvantage. It can never feel comfortable in the sort of political discourse it was designed to transcend, in the murky, inflamed, florid, rapt world of the irrational. Liberalism works best in a world in which liberalism is no longer necessary. "I do not comprehend people who set history in motion," Grossman writes. But he must comprehend them. Sometimes the liberal must dirty himself with other people's demons, because the demons, too, may do well in a democracy. Revisionist Zionism, and the religious right, and the settlers movement, flourished partly because Israeli liberals despised them too much to fight them. Thus liberalism was unseated as a result of its own condescension. It flattered itself that its rivals were historical anachronisms. Then it watched helplessly as the historical anachronisms came to power.

Grossman endorses the banishment of absolutes from politics. "I fear life among people who have an obligation to an absolute order," he writes, after his own trip to Ofra. "Absolute orders require, in the end, absolute deeds, and I . . . am a partial, relative, imperfect man who prefers to make correctable mistakes rather than attain supernatural achievements." Yes, yes, yes. We are all the children of Camus, and Orwell, and Niebuhr, and Trilling, and Aron. The celebration of finitude is the very heart of liberalism in the age of totalitarianism. "I lack the assurance that allows one to settle everything," wrote Camus, about Algeria. But the celebration of finitude runs the risk of complacence. The abhorrence of the absolute may also have the consequence of weakening the will, of impoverishing the imagination, of inhibiting action. The aversion to final solutions becomes an aversion to solutions. Tragedy is everywhere. Irony is wild. Everything is existential. "I sank deeper and deeper into frustration and melancholy," Grossman writes, "and the futility of the unbreakable prison of circumstance, without a solution and without an outlet, only continual pain, an ongoing and spreading error." There is a basis in reality, certainly, for Grossman's dark mood. But it has a basis, too, in the resignation, the wanness, the loss of faith in concrete steps, the inability to anger, that comes of the cult of limits.

WHY MUST reason be sweet? It is easy to act on an absolute. Among the Israelis and among the Palestinians, the absolutists have shown epoch-making efficiency. But surely it is also possible to be resolute for the sake of something less than an absolute. To be steadfast and stubborn and shrewd on behalf of a plan that will not solve all of the problems, but will solve some of the problems. To be radical, but not refer to totality. To be certain, but not about everything. To be deadly in earnest about change. To be a liberal bastard, a bastard for compromise, for mutual recognition, for peace. To step seriously, in sum, into politics. Many solutions have been proposed for the Israeli-Palestinian problem. The problem is not without solutions; it is, indeed, a struggle between its solutions. Grossman is engaged with the problem, but he is not engaged with its solution. For that reason, he is, in the end, disengaged.

Tolerance is the essential condition of a decent politics. It is not, however, itself a politics. You must argue for something more specific than everybody's right to argue. Among the hundred flowers that you wish to see bloom, one flower must finally be yours. Humanism, too, is prior to politics. It rules out evil solutions, but it brings no good solution about. When humanism considers itself sufficient for a politics, it produces only a politics of sensibility, a politics for narrators and spectators; impotence, and finally silence.

SILENCE WAS the conclusion of Camus's involvement in the Algerian conflict. "Finding it impossible to join either camp, faced with the gradual disappearance of that third camp in which it was still possible to keep a cool head, doubting my certainties and the things I thought I knew . . . I decided to take no further part in the constant polemics that have had no result other than to harden the uncompromising points of view at loggerheads in Algeria." Thus he wrote in 1958, to introduce a collection of his articles on Algeria, which he called, with his preternatural probity, "the record of a failure." Why did Camus fail? The answer to that question casts light not only upon Grossman, but also upon the thinking of many Israeli liberals during the past decade.

For a start, Camus's view was riddled with contradictions. "The way to human society passes through national society," he maintained against the French; but then his notion of "national society" for the Algerians failed to include the idea of sovereignty, which is surely its highest expression. ("There has never yet been an Algerian nation.") He demanded "complete justice" for the Arabs of Algeria, he wanted "to liberate them from the colonial system," but justice and liberation did not mean independence. In place of a national revolution, Camus proposed a democratic reform, "a federation based on institutions similar to those of the Swiss confederation," which would allow the communities of Algeria "to associate without fusing together," a binational state that would avoid what Camus feared most, "a definitive break." By then, of course, it was too late for reform. And there, in the developing world, Switzerland is a chimera.

The call for reform represented, however, the perfect expression of Camus's own engagement with the conflict. It was intensely personal and intensely moral; and somewhere between the personal and the moral, the political was scanted. In his "Appeal for a Civil

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Truce" in 1956, Camus made

> a purely humanitarian appeal that might, at least on one point, silence the fury and unite most Algerians, both French and Arab, without their having to give up any of their convictions. . . . Our appeal has nothing to do with politics. I am not a political man. . . . We don't want to get you to agree to anything politically. . . . We can propose, without making any change in the present situation, that we refrain from what makes it unforgivable—the murder of the innocent.

But no civil truce came about. The reason was simple. A political problem demanded a political solution. Alistair Horne calls Camus's plan an "idealistic sortie," and remarks, "He withdrew into his shell."

Perhaps because he came to appreciate the need for politics, Camus proposed his federation plan two years later. But it, too, was detached from reality, which was harsh. Camus's response to the Algerian crisis was, basically, to call for a suspension of the political. "Without their having to give up any of their convictions": but those convictions were the springs of action, from which they could never be separated. "Without making any change in the present situation": but it was precisely a change in the present situation that was demanded all around. In a conflict like Algeria, when two communities call themselves nations in an age of nationalism, and turn to slaughter, nothing is more urgent than practical politics.

CAMUS WAS in an impossible position: he was a *pied-noir* liberal, a critical mind in love with a community. (His most famous formulation of his predicament came in Stockholm: "I love justice; but I will fight for my mother before justice." It is a moving, confused, disabling proposition, true in a trivial way, finally a theory of complicity with circumstance.) It is important to note, however, more than a quarter of a century after the "definitive break" between France and Algeria that Camus dreaded, that his fears about its consequences were, almost all of them, wrong. "If you want Algeria to separate from France, both of them will perish." But they did not. "A purely Arab Algeria could not achieve the economic independence without which political independence is but a deception." But it did (and many politically independent states are economically dependent). "Algeria will be lost and the consequences terrible, for

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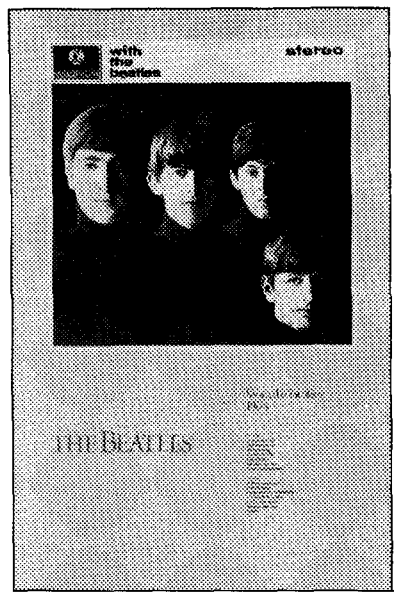

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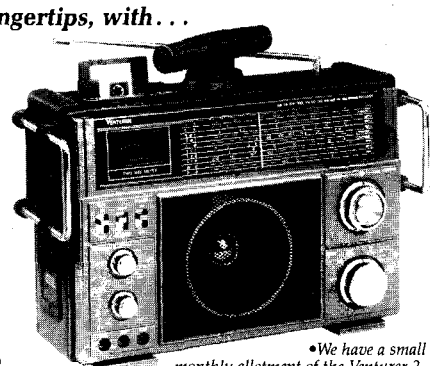

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the Arabs as for the French." But for the Arabs, Algeria was not lost, it was gained; it was lost only for the French, who had France. A "definitive break" was morally the most just, politically the most painless, historically the most sensible, outcome. Algeria did not want to "become human." It already was human. Algeria wanted to become Algerian.

Camus's *actuelles* about Algeria have much to teach about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I read them in Jerusalem last month, when the Holy Land, 1988, looked a little like Algeria, 1955: waiting for Phillipeville. Camus's essays are a guide to moral honor for national communities in collision. But they are easily overtaken by the rapid escalations, the accelerations of ideology and violence, that characterize such collisions. Camus is useful for the early stages, when the occupiers are relatively enlightened and the occupied are relatively calm; but the history of nationalism in this century shows almost no example of a solution in the early stages. For the savage later stages, when the need for separation becomes plain, Camus is useless. Humanism is powerless to bring peace to nationalism. And nationalism does not let humanism stand in its way. In the later stages of conflict, the humanist will fall dumb, and into despair. But the politician may act, resolutely and humanely, to cut the knot. As, for example, David Ben-Gurion acted, when he accepted partition, when he preferred a Jewish state and a Palestinian state to a binational Jewish-Palestinian state, when he backed up his solution with force (which he used against the radicals in his own community, too).

There is a significant difference, surely, between Algeria and Israel. The French in Algeria could repair to "metropolitan France." (This, too, Camus had feared, and this fear came true: about one-and-a-half million *pieds-noirs* left Algeria.) There is no "metropolitan Israel." There is only Israel. And there are no *pieds-noirs*. Israel's inhabitants are there by right, and forever. In the Holy Land, separation means partition, not exodus. Still, the similarities are striking (even physically striking: the el-Amari refugee camp seemed to me straight out of Pontecorvo). They are also cautionary. There is still time to avoid Algerian horrors, still time for compromise, for partition, for an exchange of territories for peace. But time will run out, unless Israeli liberalism confronts its own version of what might be called, after Fritz Stern, the political consequences of the unpolitical Israeli, unless the parties of partition throw themselves into politics.

Is there a Palestinian party of partition? It has hardly identified itself clearly, except in the lonely instances of individuals like Khalidi; and it will mark a departure from the tradition of Palestinian politics. There is an Israeli party of partition. It includes the Labor Party, the Citizens' Rights Movement, the Peace Now movement, and many other groups. Almost all these Israeli liberals, however, are hobbled by a curious disconnection of principles from politics.

The liberals most active in politics (the Labor Party, certainly) are the liberals least forceful about principles. The liberals least active in politics (the Peace Now movement, for example, which prides itself upon its distance from parties and parliamentary work) are the liberals most forceful about principles. Shimon Peres makes speeches about the "modalities" and the "instrumentalities" of an international peace conference, as if political and psychological enthusiasm for territorial concessions is widespread in Israeli society (but a recent poll, for example, found 49 percent of the Israelis against the notion of territories for peace, and only 43 percent for it); and he

LOUISE AND LOUIS, 1932

"On the boat . . . Nevelson had an improbable involvement with . . . Céline, who, she says, wanted to marry her."
Time, January 12, 1981

You are a fanatic
I place my sliced fingers
who hates Jews.
into infected corpses
But you would marry me.
bringing out the only
The revelations I seek
insight I know.
are like transparent houses.
I cannot find
What I know about myself
the transcendence
could not have come from me.
from Passage Street
As a child I knew
where the shops sell
white space, but when
my childhood memories.
my son came I knew guilt.
Lying to oneself about dying
Then I understood
will not ease the pain
Chekhov's Masha.
a body is born with.
Now black boxes
I am the victim,
store what has been
the Jew. My hatred
revealed to me.
is prescribed by
My door in Soho
every diseased patient.
is black but not
I would live
for mourning, for
a thousand years
the challenge, the
to see every Asian,
excitement. My studio
every African, die
space is my life space;
outside my garret window.
there I structured nature
My room keeps me
in black and white
from the rich and poor.
until the x-ray burns me.
I live my novels,
This planet is sculpture
though I am a lie
and I am a door knob,
whose truth has been
a piano leg, a mirror
booked by the police.
held down inside it.
With my soiled trousers down
My house is on Spring Street.
I sit here inside my corpse
My father's houses are gone.
waiting for my death
There is no one who could
to become due, payments
build what I want.
in this way station
Not even this box woman.
collected when the journey begins.

GARY MITCHNER

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continues to insist, even as the Palestinians are organizing themselves for an extended resistance, that territorial concessions may be made only to Jordanians. The popular movements, the extraparliamentary oppositions to the occupation, and to the Likud's designs upon the territories, appear to prefer being cultural to being political, in a foolish imitation of the American peace movement of the 1960s. (A few weeks ago Joan Baez appeared at a rally in Tel Aviv and sang a protest song in Hebrew about "our children.") Meanwhile the Likud, whose best ideologues are also its best intriguers, is expected to win, that is, it is expected to form a government after the elections in November, and *Maariv* finds a likelihood of 17 seats in the next Knesset to the *right* of the Likud. (Meir Kahane is given five.)

David Grossman's book is a fine illustration of the inefficacy of Israeli liberalism, of truth without toughness, of opposition without muscle. It is a noble, carefully written book that will rattle very little, because of its refusal to descend to political details. Its concreteness, for that reason, is finally a conceit. There is a hilarious mistake in the English translation that captures the problem. The sentence (most of which was quoted above) should read, "Absolute orders require, in the end, absolute deeds, and I, alas, am a partial, relative, imperfect man. . . ." In the original, the Hebrew word (really the Yiddish word) *nebakh*, which I have given as "alas," might also mean "unfortunately," or "sad to say." In the English, however, the sentence reads, "Absolute orders require, in the end, absolute deeds, and I, nebbish, am a partial, relative, imperfect man. . . ." The writer as nebbish, the liberal as nebbish, the dissenter as nebbish: they do not really trouble the other side's sleep. Conscience has many enemies, *nebakh*, and one of them is timidity.

LEON WIESELTIER

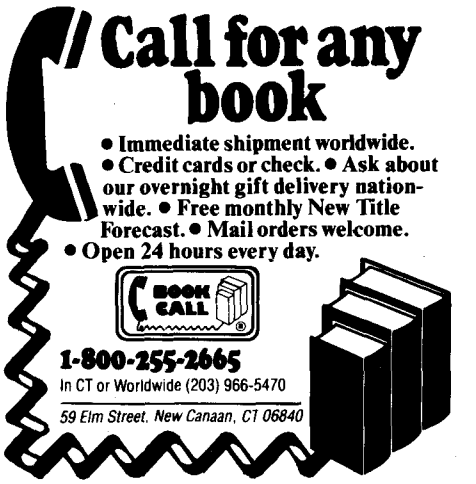
THE TRANSFORMING SELF

Diary : Volume One
by Witold Gombrowicz
translated by Lillian Vallee

(Northwestern University Press, 248 pp., $29.95, $12.95 paper)

"At some point, it is no longer a matter of creativity itself, but the recovery of the capacity to create. We have to produce that portion of freedom, boldness, ruthlessness, and even, I would say, irresponsibility, without which creation is impossible," observed the Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz on the subject of literature in exile. Gombrowicz was living at the time in Argentina, and his three-volume *Diary*, written between 1953 and 1969, carries the advice to the extreme. The book is a raging battle zone in which the author settles his accounts with Poles and Poland, grapples with the notion of national identity, with the writer's obligations to his community, with poetry and art, with European culture and with his own sense of isolation, with Catholicism, communism, existentialism, with philosophy in general. Yet he intersperses his polemics with personal confessions, little eccentricities, gossip, jokes, and lyrical passages in which he tries to come to grips with the sense of the futility of his own individual life. One of the book's many charms, in fact, is its unique combination of assertiveness and self-doubt, venom and vulnerability; it is the diary of a person cast, by choice as much as by chance, into a life of contradictory roles.

Gombrowicz arrived in Buenos Aires in August 1939, as a celebrity invited to participate in a maiden voyage of a Polish ocean liner, and as a "cultural envoy" to the Polish community in Argentina. In Poland he had published two collections of short stories, a play, and *Ferdydurke*, a novel that stirred and scandalized the Polish literary community with its challenge to the pious, patriotic myths of the Polish mentality. After the outbreak of the war, feeling himself unfit for heroic posturing, he refused to return home. He remained in Argentina among the Polish *estancieros*, and became a curiosity and a social attraction: an intriguing figure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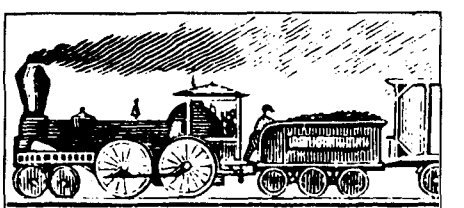

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with the stigma of a traitor, a socially acceptable kind of Lord Jim. The curiosity, however, did not last long, and Gombrowicz found himself in a precarious financial position. He managed to obtain a modest job as a bank clerk, which he held through most of his Argentinean years. Increasing international recognition, and some stipends, enabled him to return to Europe in 1963, six years before his death.

THIS FIRST volume of Gombrowicz's *Diary* is apparently the product of the most painful and lonely period in the author's life. He could no longer tolerate his debilitating and exhausting job, yet he was afraid to seek support elsewhere. His health was failing, and it seemed that he would never again be able to function as a writer. There was a growing chasm between him and the Argentinean Poles, as well as his few Argentinean friends. The first volume of the *Diary* documents a heroic effort at self-affirmation. Each of the first four entries is a single word: "Me." In a totally unabashed manner, the author places himself at the center of the universe, proclaims himself the ultimate measure of everything, and probes his intellectual resources as if they were the only thing left in the world. In a less perceptive and disciplined mind, the exercise could easily have resulted in literary disaster. In Gombrowicz's case, it produced one of the most unusual and important books written in the postwar period.

What interested Gombrowicz most, in his writing as well as in his life, was the way in which man creates "forms" by which he perceives himself and is perceived by others. The source of that curiosity, as the author hints in his confessional passages, and in the few interviews he gave in his lifetime, was partly the pretentiousness of his social milieu (the Polish landowning gentry), partly a sense of inner instability and ambiguity that manifested itself in a powerful attraction toward everything that seemed inferior, grotesque, deformed.

Gombrowicz was born in 1904 on his father's estate in central Poland. At school he distinguished himself in Polish and French, failing most other subjects. He studied law at the University of Warsaw, where he made his valet attend some of the less enthralling courses. Later he was sent by his family to continue his education at the Institut des Hautes Etudes Internationales in Paris. After a year, however, his father ended his allowance, adducing his son's "disorderly life" and the bad company he kept. Reluctant to return to Poland, Gombrowicz left for the Pyrenees, where he got into trouble with the police and was rescued by a priest, who became a close friend. Eventually he returned to Poland, and in order to regain his family's support he accepted a clerical position at the Warsaw Court.

In his own description, in a long conversation with Dominique de Roux published in English as *A Kind of Testament* (1973), Gombrowicz was living a triple life: as a country gentleman and a mother's darling, arrogant and naive; as a budding intellectual who wanted to be a writer (but not that much, as he admits); and as something he could not properly define but that appeared morbid, repugnant, and fascinating at the same time. "I was abnormal, twisted, degenerate, abominable, and solitary," he said. "I slunk along, hugging the walls. Where could I find this secret blemish, which separated me from the human heart?"

SUCH confessions resound, perhaps, with adolescent self-dramatization. Yet Gombrowicz took his immaturity seriously. While looking for the secret blemish that apparently made him less complete and less mature than others, he discovered that man in general is less mature, less complete, less defined, less human than he would like to appear. Man seems inferior, not fully grown, constantly below the level of his own consciousness and culture, yet also unable to exist outside appearances.

How does the "form" by which we are known to the world and to ourselves create itself in us? Gombrowicz recalls a scene that appears in numerous variations in most of his works: "a farm-hand in a pea jacket, his head bare under the rain, talking to my brother Janusz, wearing a coat and sheltered under an umbrella. The hardness of the farm-hand's eyes, his cheeks, his mouth, in the pouring rain. . . . Beauty." Of the two human forms confronting each other—the master and the servant, the "superior" and the "inferior" order—which is more "authentic," which is closer to life? Both exist only in relation to each other. Each one without the other would be something else: not really "himself," but the product of a different confrontation. Gombrowicz concluded that "form" is created not inside an individual, but between people, in what he called the "inter-human church."

Man *is* what he appears to others, and his appearance becomes his real, though momentary, self. The self is a battlefield, a cacophony of clashing forms imposed on us simultaneously by various circumstances. But the self is also engaged in an even more fundamental struggle between form and formlessness:

> The most important, most extreme, and most incurable dispute is that waged in us by two of our most basic strivings: the one that desires form, shape, definition and the other, which protests against shape, and does not want form. Humanity is constructed in such a way that it must define itself and then escape its own definitions. Reality is not something that allows itself to be completely contained in form. Form is not in harmony with the essence of life, but all thought which tries to describe this imperfection also becomes form and thereby confirms only our striving for it.

IN GOMBROWICZ'S inter-human church, the question of authenticity becomes irrelevant. The real man is always artificial. We think, we feel, we judge, when in fact something thinks, feels, and judges through us. To be "authentic" means simply to admit one's artificiality, to be able to toy with it and see it from a distance, to transform oneself from a man who has a form into a man who creates form. The diary provides numerous examples of the liberating games Gombrowicz played with his aristocratic cousins, with his female entourage, with his Argentinean and Polish friends. It reveals his perfect ear for all kinds of pretense, for "cretinism" and "immaturity" in social life (at formal dinners, gala concerts, art exhibitions)—in situations in which people inevitably try to present themselves as different from, as more refined than, what they actually are.

Yet the purpose of these games was not only playful. Gombrowicz was clearly looking for a style that would allow a more natural and free attitude toward culture, politics, and society:

> There exist two contrary types of humanism: one, which we could call the religious, tries to send man to his knees before a work of human culture—it forces us to adore and respect Music or Poetry, for example, or the State or Divinity; and the other, a more difficult current of our spirit which strives to restore man's sovereignty and independence in relation to the Gods and Muses, which are ultimately man's creation. In the second instance, the word "art" is written with a small letter. And it is beyond doubt that a style that is capable of encompassing both of these tendencies is fuller, more au-

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thentic, and more closely reflects the antinomies of our nature than a style that expresses only one of these two poles of our emotions.

Gombrowicz saw his "philosophy of form" as an attempt to demystify man, to reveal the hidden paradoxes that govern his existence, to strip him of his cultural fetishes, and to replace them with what he called "the difficult childhood of an adult":

> First, push away all the things that make everything easier, find yourself in a cosmos that is as bottomless as you can stand, in a cosmos at the limits of your consciousness, and experience a condition where you are left to your own loneliness and your own strength, only then, when the abyss which you have not managed to tame throws you from the saddle, sit down on the earth and discover the sand and grass anew.

THAT VENTURE inevitably made Gombrowicz confront two contemporary philosophies that also presented the demystification of consciousness as their main goal, Marxism and existentialism. In the *Diary*, the author describes his relationship with existentialism as "tormentingly unclear and tense. It intrudes into my existence, but I don't want it. And it is not I who am in this predicament. Strange. Philosophy, exhorting to authenticity, leads us into gigantic falsehoods." Gombrowicz notes the existentialist message of his first novel, *Ferdydurke*, whose protagonist is kidnapped by his childhood teacher, stripped of his adulthood, and placed in a school, where he is forced to struggle for his independence and maturity. *Ferdydurke*, proclaims its author, "is existence in a vacuum, nothing except existence."

Yet at the same time Gombrowicz rejects the existentialist concept of the absolute moral freedom of an individual. In his remarks on Camus's *The Rebel*, he says:

> Conscience, the individual conscience, does not have the power that it has for [Camus] as far as saving the world. Don't we see again and again that conscience has almost no voice in the matter? Does man kill or torture because he has come to the conclusion that he has the right to do so? He kills because others kill. He tortures because others torture. The most abhorrent deed becomes easy if the road to it has been paved, and, for example, in concentration camps the road to death was so well trodden that the bourgeois incapable of killing a fly at home exterminated people with ease.

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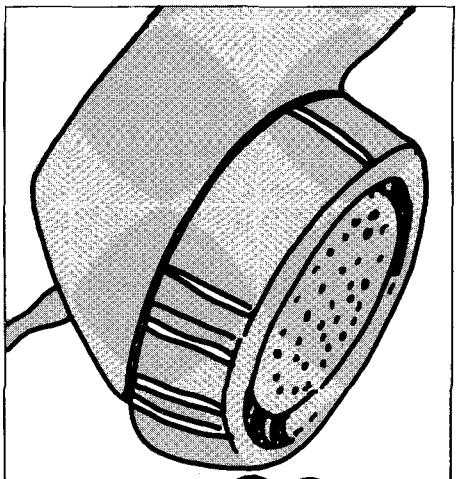

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dividual consciousness, but its relationship with others, that dictates moral and existential choices—Gombrowicz's notion that man is merely a theoretical concept apart from the social context—brought him dangerously close to some of the basic tenets of Marxist anthropology. Gombrowicz was aware of his proximity to Marxism, and of its implications. His *Diary* displays a great deal of intellectual effort to clarify both his intellectual attraction to communism and his instinctive rejection of it. He starts by dismissing what he considered the "wrong," or sentimental, reasons for the rejection of communism: the love of the past, God as an absolute justification of a particular order, a common pity for the victims of revolutionary upheavals. "Communism can be judged effectively," he says, "only from the perspective of the most severe and profound sense of existence, never from a point of view that is superficial and subdued, never from a bourgeois point of view." He decided to test the communist dialectic against itself, to show that the communist dialectic is not quite dialectical enough. It is a dirty trick, he concludes, a fraud meant to trap the critical mind.

COMMUNIST DIALECTICS, that hard, surgical tool so capable at dissecting, unmasking, and demystifying the "fetishes" and the contradictions of the old world, suddenly lost its legitimacy, Gombrowicz caustically observes, within communism's own precincts:

> I am allowed to cast aspersion on my own truths as long as I am on the side of capitalism, but this same self-checking is supposed to cease the minute I join the ranks of the revolution. Here dialectics suddenly gives way to dogma as a result of some astounding about-face. . . . And we see that we are once again confronted with one of the great mystifications, similar to those unmasked by Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, who revealed that behind the facade of our Christian, bourgeois, and sublimated morality vied other, anonymous, and brutal forces. Here the mystification is all the more perverse, however, in that it relies precisely on unmasking.

There was, perhaps, still another reason for Gombrowicz's rejection of communism. It appeared to him as one of the most extreme products of the modern mind that found itself alone with the world and tried to control it by the sheer effort of intellect. Perhaps the only true modernist in Polish letters, Gombrowicz did not believe enough in the power of thought to allow it to "tear into the world." The world should be allowed, instead, to create itself. "In this second instance the mind no longer asks what the world is supposed to be like and, instead, after narrowing its field of vision, asks, how am I to act in the world? The mind then becomes that which it has been for centuries: an instrument of individual cognition within the scale of a single life. In this reduced scale it feels surer of itself."

UNLIKE most Polish literary émigrés, Gombrowicz was never a total nonperson in his own country. His pre-war fiction and *Transatlantic*, his first novel written in exile, were published officially, and his dramas—*Princess Ivona*, *Operetta*, and *The Marriage*—were occasionally staged in Polish theaters. His later novels *Cosmos* and *Pornografia*, and most important of all, his *Diary*, remained unprintable until the last few years, when they appeared in editions that were expurgated of any direct references to communism and the Soviet Union.

Gombrowicz's presence in Polish letters was highly controversial, not only in the political sense. He constantly chastised Polish writers for being too subservient to Poland:

> A Pole does not know how to act toward Poland, it confuses him and makes him mannered. Poland inhibits the Pole to such a degree that nothing really "works" for him. Poland forces him into a cramped state—he wants to help it too much, he wants to elevate it too much. . . . There is something here with which [Poles] are not yet comfortable.

If a Pole wants really to help Poland, claimed Gombrowicz, if he wants to make Poland equal to Europe, he should first become an authentic individual, that is, he should unlearn the habit of falling to his knees before Poland or Europe. He should be capable of total disregard of any form that is not uniquely his own. If Poland appears to be culturally immature, moreover, its very immaturity should become its trump card. A Pole, or any representative of a "secondary culture," should appear in a Western salon neither in a folk costume nor in a frock coat, but as someone "in between": formless, unkempt, unfinished. Only in this way can he save his freedom and prove that Europe, too, is less mature and less rooted in itself than it wants to appear.

In Gombrowicz's case, the strategy proved partly successful. In the late

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1950s, due to the efforts of his friend and promoter Konstanty Jelenski, a Polish writer living in Paris, his works started to appear in French translation and were favorably received. Sartre credited him with the invention of the "new, analytical novel." Publishers and critics in other countries also started to take an interest. At the end of his life, his name made the "short list" for the Nobel Prize: legend has it that he lost the prize in 1968 to Yasunari Kawabata by one vote.

Gombrowicz was deeply convinced that his discovery of the "drama of form" touched on some of the most crucial problems of modernity. Yet he remained an oddity, a maverick watched and admired from a distance: a Polish writer at war with Polish literature, a self-proclaimed European who held Europe in disdain, a critic of modern culture who had to pay for the translations of his works. In his own time he became one of the very few Polish writers with a truly international career. But he was also living proof that the best works of "secondary cultures" usually see the light of day as artifacts of cultural archaeology. Still, in the *Diary*, his relative obscurity became a liberating force, giving the book its unique momentum and its intellectual boldness. Gombrowicz once pondered the aggressiveness of his "self" as it was set free on the pages of his journal, and concluded: "Was it not because this 'self' living on the other side of the ocean was so insignificant, so marginal, so anonymous? I had nothing to lose. I could write whatever passed through my head—nobody cared. . . . I was nothing, so I could do anything."

JAROSLAW ANDERS

Jaroslaw Anders is a Polish writer living in Washington.

THE WITCHES OF UPDIKE

S.
by John Updike

(Knopf, 279 pp., $17.95)

John Updike's fiction has always suffered under the whips and scorns of outraged feminists. They charge him with an inability to portray, or even to imagine, women in other than clichéd, male-oriented ways, however high-flown their expression. He doesn't like women, they say, and is incapable of "getting inside" a female mind. I think the accusation is pretty much on the mark and from my file pluck a couple of many possible pieces of evidence. From a story called "The Lifeguard": "Women are an alien race of pagans set down among us. Every seduction is a conversion." From the novel *A Month of Sundays*: "Babies and guilt, women are made for lugging."

Updike has said that he wrote his new novel in part as a refutation of the feminist take on him. If this is so, the sad irony is that *S.* is only likely to confirm it. Indeed, it seems to me that Updike's fiction is, or has become, more problematic, more afflicted, than the most thoroughgoing consideration of gender bias can even touch on, let alone explain. Any broad estimation of Updike's position in the public and, to some extent, the critical mind would include these elements: he is a superb "natural" stylist; he is among the most erudite of our writers of fiction; and he is one of the very few who concern themselves seriously with religion. I want to take up each of these assertions, or dogmas, about Updike's fiction, in order to place *S.* in an intelligible context.

To begin with, there isn't any question that Updike is one of the most purely gifted of our major novelists. Yet his particular talent doesn't necessarily make him a fully satisfying, or an estimable, one. This is because sheer verbal power, that apparent force of nature, the cormorant-like ingestion of experience and its seemingly effortless conversion into "brilliant" language, isn't in itself sufficient for great fiction. It may even in some ways be inimical to it.

Years ago, in a review of *The Centaur*, I cited, as a cautionary note on Updike, Pascal's remark that "continual eloquence is wearying." My point was that in his pursuit of, or delight in, vivid writing, his penchant for putting his coruscating literary genius on display, Updike keeps his prose in a constant fever, making no provisions for the periodic cessations of intensity, the quiet, sometimes matter-of-fact integument and ground that can alone sustain eloquence and keep it from satiety. In a related vein, Gilbert Sorrentino once described Updike's style as "twitching and quivering incessantly." Sorrentino went on to say that Updike's writing, so often praised for its "poetry," is in fact falsely poetic, a matter of verbal glitter with almost nothing beneath it and no invigorating coherence with actuality: "Its fancy images are not in touch with the world but emblazon it."

I think this is too harsh or too sweeping an indictment, but some part of it is true. Updike isn't always cutting arabesques on the surface of the world. His perceptions of manners and morals within the suburban, white, affluent milieus he's chiefly probed are frequently shrewd and original, and his eye for the small, telling absurdities of our culture is usually keen. What's more, a denunciation like Sorrentino's ignores Updike's humor, a generally bitchy or even cruel humor, to be sure, but not easily resisted. Yet too often we do find him straining for effect, sacrificing sense for éclat, studding his prose with little jewels of expressiveness that feel, and alas mostly are, arbitrary, merely fanciful. (From *The Centaur*: "On a stiff tablecloth a loaf of sugary bread lay sequined in pointillist dabs of light.")

As for his erudition, yes, I think Updike is among the most learned of our writers of fiction, but how deep does this learning go, and for what is it used? His mind is stuffed with materials, from classical languages and mythology to the latest scientific theories. He is a master, or at least an energetic practitioner, of allusion, reference, the esoteric (and therefore often snobbish) citation. Indeed he sometimes gives the impression of being a higher level, more "serious" James Michener, assiduously doing research on some subject or other before weaving a fiction around it. *The Centaur* and *The Coup* are in part novels of this kind.

This quasi-documentary or heavily researched aspect of his writing, which sometimes gives the effect of a smart brat parading his knowledge, has become increasingly pronounced in his last three novels: *The Witches of Eastwick*, with its arcane lore about sorcery; *Roger's Ver-*

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sion, heavily drawing on computer science and so-called "crisis" theology; and *S.* . . . well, I'll come to *its* scholarly paraphernalia in a moment. All three books give off a feeling of unease, if not of desperation, a sense of straining for subject as well as style. It's as if Updike had begun to suspect the exhaustion of his predominantly realistic and familiar vein, the permutations of adultery and avarice in WASP precincts, and was trying to rebut the general charge—of which misogyny is a specific instance—that he has narrow preoccupations and constricted sympathy. Yet the preoccupations remain, the sympathy is still straitened; and nowhere does this lack of sympathy, and an accompanying lack of true engagement, show itself more depressingly than in his treatment of religion.

Perhaps I should speak of the place of religion in these and other Updike works. To put it plainly, I don't think Updike is in any sense a religious writer, or even that he has any serious interest in religious experience. The sociology of religion, yes, or more accurately, of certain areas of Protestantism: numerous churchgoers, and a battalion of ministers with their wives and paramours, inhabit his fiction, but they are engaged less in seeking or even inquiring after salvation than in occupying a place in society, a métier with minimal spiritual duties or demands. The title character of *Roger's Version* would seem to be speaking for his creator when he muses on the "barbaric religion of blood atonement" symbolized by the Cross.

A sticky business that, an unpleasant one. Better to concentrate on something less consequential, more "human"—say, the relations between nominal faith and the pressures, inconveniences really, of moral and especially sexual prohibitions. Insofar as it deals with religion at all, one can extract from Updike's fiction a continuing intricate rationale for illicit erotic pursuits within the confines of what Sarah Worth, the protagonist of *S.*, calls an "atrophied, Puritan theocracy." To be sure, not many of us are held by that particular dead hand. But we're all caught up in some moral code or other, and one source of Updike's thematic appeal, to male readers at any rate, is the suspension of such codes to allow the worm in the flesh to wriggle more freely.

The anti-sermon goes something like this: "We're God's creatures (if He exists), we're human, we're bored, we have sensual natures. How can He (if He exists) punish us for yielding now and then to their pulsations?" Any sense of sin, but more important any sense of the possible tension between agape and eros, faith and carnality, has been leached out. Guilt is an emotion foreign to Updike's characters—except for many of his women, who, he told us, are "built" for hauling it around.

It's in the light of Updike's recent strategy of trying to correct his image in feminist eyes that we have to look at *S.* Even more than *The Witches of Eastwick*, *S.* seems to celebrate the freedom of women to pursue their carnal and emotional ends, and to be relieved of guilt for doing so. And even though the ostensible "religion" in the book is tantric yoga, the enemy remains that old, weary, "atrophied," discredited Protestantism. This it seems is what accounts for Updike's decision to rewrite, or to "up-date," perhaps the greatest of all American fictions in which sex and religion confront one another, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, with its archetypal female victim.

The direct exploitation of the earlier book is thin and halfhearted. "S" (for Sarah, maybe also for sex) replaces the old "A"; two quotes from *The Scarlet Letter* serve as epigraphs; Sarah's daughter is named Pearl and her mother's maiden name is Prynne; a Chillingsworth (and, from another Hawthorne novel, a Blithedale) figures superficially in the narrative. Yet the intention is clear throughout: to "revise" Hawthorne, to re-create him in a comic mode, to take the sting out of his tale by placing its protagonist in a modern setting where adultery is no longer anything to cause anguish, and so to exorcise the remaining ghosts of Puritanism.

At 44, Sarah Worth has skipped out on her cold, successful New England doctor husband after years of "respectable bondage and socially sanctioned frivolity," as she tells him in one of the letters that make up this epistolary novel. She's gone to an ashram in Arizona ruled over by a guru, called "arhat" here, who preaches the primacy of sex over ego, and over everything else. The place is avowedly modeled after the Rajneeshpuram of late, lamented Oregon memory, and Updike has a good deal of sport mocking its more blatant silliness and fraudulence. What Sarah calls at first "our beautiful experiment in non-competitive living" turns out to be a ferocious battle among several women for the chief

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place in the arhat's bed, and he himself turns out to be one Art Steinmetz, a fake fakir from Watertown, Massachusetts.

When the satiric energy is there, *S.* can be very funny. The arhat answers a dunning letter about "6 unpaid Lincoln limos" by saying that he's referred it to "our chief accountant . . . who is unfortunately enjoying two weeks of uninterrupted meditation." Sarah tells a friend that "I'm beyond . . . anger . . . or any emotion except love and acceptance," and immediately follows this with "Charles [her husband] now just seems impossibly small, like one of those bugs you see crawling across a bathroom tile." The arhat, in the process of seducing the willing Sarah, tells her that "Maithuna is not what is called in this coarse country 'fucking.' It is cosmic play."

The entire Maithuna sequence between Sarah and the "guru obscuru" is a little masterpiece of parody and wicked humor. Updike's eye for the right trade names (Clairol, Fritos, No More Tears) and the pompous object ("fluted double-serpentine candleholders") is as accurate as ever. And on the more sober side, there's a somewhat touching letter from Sarah to her college sweetheart, whom her proper WASP family forcibly dissuaded her from marrying because of his Jewishness and intellectuality, a surrender she says she now deeply regrets.

YET THE satire is inconsistent, and the moments of true feeling are rare. Updike doesn't seem able to decide if, despite the quackery, those mystics of carnality aren't on to a good thing. In any case, having immersed himself in Eastern erotic theology, he isn't about to let his investment lie idle. The book has a 13-page glossary of Sanskrit terms, many of them of a sexual nature, and the mind flags at having to juggle them and to retain their various meanings in the text: "*Aropa* attribution of qualities to the object, that is, subduing the beloved's physical, biological, and psychological aspects to an ontological perspective"; "*Purnabhisheka* ritual copulation practiced in 'left-handed' tantric yoga; the *shri chakra* or *chakra puja*."

There's something half-serious and half-ludicrous about all this. Sarah only fitfully sees the absurd side, however, for she's too intent, as Updike's representative "new" woman, on pursuing her dream of rebirth. In the end Updike has his protagonist, whom the arhat has renamed "Kundalini," "the serpent of female energy dormant at the base of the spinal column," flee the ashram's collapse and relocate on a Caribbean island. There she contemplates the lessons she's learned and thinks, in "a serene and benign" mood (but with twinges of regret), about the break she's made from her stick of a husband and her wider past.

But one freedom she hasn't gained is from her bitchiness—to Charles, for example, on hearing of his impending remarriage, "You and your roly-poly little suburban pudding." And more important, one freedom Updike hasn't won in writing *S.* is from his fixed sense of women, his inevitable creation of them as projections of male sensibility.

There are several wonderful unwitting specific examples of this. In a letter to her daughter, Sarah speaks of the girl's "wide-eyed long-haired easy-striding American beauty." No mother would write like this, no woman would. But a man, and one, moreover, frozen in adolescent romantic desire, surely might. Again to her daughter: "How can we *help* but love those fathers, the way the sides of their necks smell of sweat and aftershave when they pick us up off the floor and give us that squeeze that knocks us breathless." Well, it would be nice for us if it were so, but I suspect that my own daughters love me for rather different reasons.

What Hawthorne was able to do with Hester Prynne, as Updike isn't able to do with Sarah, was to extend his imagination to encompass her difference from him, and then to inculpate himself in her sorrowful fate. In wishing to make his modern Hester's destiny a lighthearted one, Updike takes no responsibility at all. Sarah isn't different from him, she's simply a man in novelistic drag. And *S.* isn't a liberation from the troubles of Updike's fiction, but their continuation. So many gifts, so much intelligence. To what end?

RICHARD GILMAN

Richard Gilman's most recent book, *Faith, Sex, Mystery: A Memoir*, has been published in paperback by Penguin.

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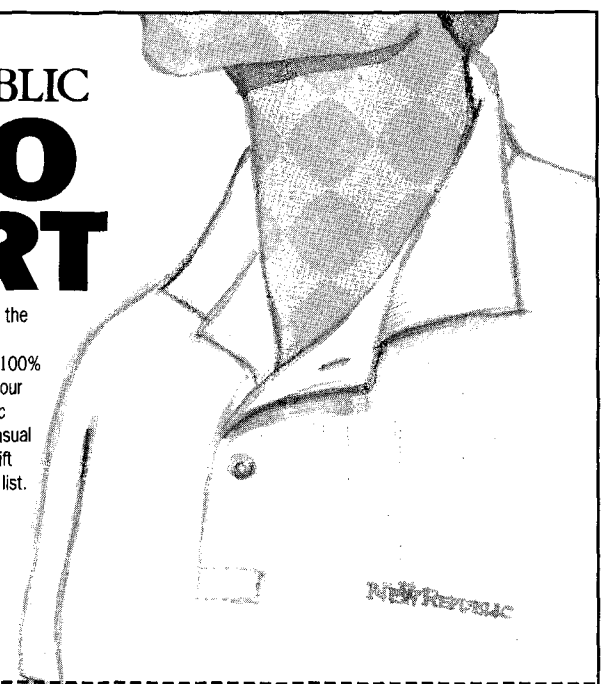

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How Businesses Behave

Inside the Firm: The Inefficiencies of Hierarchy by Harvey Leibenstein

(Harvard University Press, 276 pp., $25)

One of the more convenient assumptions of formal economic theory is that the internal mechanisms of all firms are the same. The firms may be large or small. And they may be monopolists, oligopolists, or manifestations of other, lesser species of imperfect competition. All seek, nonetheless, to maximize income in the same fashion and with, broadly speaking, the same proficiency.

No economist of more than minimal perception believes the above. Business schools flourish on the notion that there can be good management and bad, and that competence in profit maximization can be cultivated. And some—I for one—have long argued that there is a problem with the assumption of profit maximization in the modern management-controlled corporation. It must be believed that this is done by executives who forgo thought of maximization for themselves. Rather, they pursue this goal single-mindedly on behalf of stockholders who have no effective power over their tenure or action and who, in the main, are unknown. This anomaly of economic theory has been highlighted of late by the takeover movement, which justifies itself by its rescue of the business enterprise for the stockholders from self-rewarding or somnambulant managements.

That is the context of this important book by Harvey Leibenstein, professor of economics at Harvard, an accomplished theorist especially known in the past for his work on demography. With something between certainty and contempt he rejects the assumption of efficient profit-maximizing behavior by the big hierarchical firms. He seeks then to formulate a theory of the forces that combine to produce behavior of varying degrees of efficiency and inefficiency as firms pursue or fail to pursue the maximization goal.

This is, with exceptions to be noted, an immensely technical exercise, in which the author makes few concessions to the relaxed or casual reader; it is a book to be studied, not read. It shows, sometimes with geometric design, how authority—the author calls it pressure—flows down through an organization. It then indicates the response it evokes at various levels. This ranges from horizontal acceptance to adversarial effect. The role of the freeloader (called the free-rider) is identified, also that of inertia, and then he shows how the ultimate result initiates new pressure or action at the top. From this structure he identifies the forces making for an efficient response to external or "environmental" conditions—prices, costs, market development, monopoly positions, and the like.

In the development of his principal thesis and his excellent summary at the end, Leibenstein only rarely eases the way with illustrations drawn from real life. If the business school case study is at one extreme in instruction on managerial behavior, he is solidly at the other. Nonetheless, his is a thought-provoking and persuasive design. And the abstraction is not total.

As his argument proceeds, Leibenstein stops to look briefly at the application of his ideas to the Israeli kibbutz (where, ostensibly at least, there is no hierarchy) and, in two very interesting chapters, at managerial authority and effectiveness in Japanese firms, to which he has devoted intensive firsthand study. He offers 13 points of contrast between Japanese and Western management, from the notion of lifetime employment as a goal and of the company as a community to emphasis on cooperation, harmony, consensus, and bonus systems, all important in the Japanese firm and not in ours.

Leibenstein's theoretical model—the vertical flows of authority and resistance and the horizontal structure of acceptance or adversarial response—seems to me to make sense. One asks, inevitably, how one judges the force of any particular pressure and response; it will obviously vary greatly in power and effect. And no doubt, there will be debate over both the character and completeness of the author's model. But Leibenstein's achievement remains. He has carried the formal apparatus of economic theory into the structure of the large modern firm. There he has identified forces making for and resisting efficient profit maximization. These are not exceptional but normal. This is an important step, and one that will influence future teaching of price and market theory substantially. It will also add impressively to the complexity of the advanced theory course. That—partly since I do not myself see the likelihood of having to teach one—I naturally applaud.

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

John Kenneth Galbraith is the co-author, with Stanislav Menshikov, of *Capitalism, Communism and Coexistence* (Houghton Mifflin).

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 2*

Right To Refuge

To the editors:

Melanie Billings-Yun's article on the plight of Vietnamese asylum seekers in Hong Kong and Thailand ("Viet Con," May 2) is too easy on both of those governments. They pursue policies called "humane deterrence," an anti-humanitarian misnomer. Prolonged detention like that suffered by the Vietnamese in Hong Kong, predicated solely on the inability to return aliens to their home country, violates the customary human rights law prohibition against arbitrary detention. In cases of large-scale influx, people seeking asylum should always receive at least temporary refuge in order to respect the international law principle of *non-refoulement*, which requires that no refugee shall be returned to a territory where his or her life or freedom will be threatened. This principle includes asylum seekers rescued at sea, who should be given temporary admission until their cases can be examined.

Certainly countries of resettlement should share the burden of Hong Kong and Thailand. But a climate of international solidarity must be created in order to facilitate this. Moreover, the need for first asylum and a nation's legal obligation to provide it under dignified circumstances in no respect depend on development of such an international approach. Measures like those taken recently by Hong Kong and Thailand are inimical to furthering international cooperation. They are designed not to share, but rather to shift, the burden.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Murder in the Court

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, at the dawning of the Reagan era, an influential book called *Wealth and Poverty* by George Gilder asserted that high tax rates lead to cannibalism. That kind of feverish rumination on the damaging effects of liberalism has become all too rare in the political dialogue. Gilder himself has gone on to discourse almost sensibly about entrepreneurship and immigration. The last reliable bastion of what might be called high-camp conservatism is the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*. There was a small masterpiece of the genre May 25 arguing that judicial activism leads to murder. In particular, the editors contended that the fatal shooting of a federal judge by a deranged litigant on May 21 could be blamed on the Senate's defeat of Robert Bork for the Supreme Court. Charles Koster killed Judge Richard Daronco after Daronco ruled against Koster's daughter in a $2.5 million sexual harassment lawsuit. The *Journal* mused: "An aggressive liberal campaign to free judges from impartial legal principles sends the message that judges base their decisions on their personal preference for who should win cases." And thus, "resentment from losing litigants should be no surprise." The real lesson of Judge Daronco's tragic death is the old one that you can't reason with madmen, but let us try. First, no one in the Bork debate maintained that judges should enforce their personal preferences irrespective of the law. The issue was interpreting the law. Second, the *Journal* itself is a hotbed of judicial activism, conservative-style. When it's not denouncing "activist judges," it's demanding that judges cancel all the special prosecutors investigating the Reagan administration, invalidate the War Powers Act, toss out local rent control statutes, and generally mow down any democratically enacted legislation it doesn't care for. Third, this particular judge ruled *against* a plaintiff demanding the kind of expansive civil rights the *Journal* doesn't care for. If the *Journal* is right about the connection, it is not judicial activism but strict constructionism that causes bloodshed. It's all very well to suppose that failure to read *Wall Street Journal* editorials is what led poor Mr. Koster (who shot himself after dispatching the judge) to lose his perspective. But what about the possibility that Judge Daronco might have been influenced in his fateful ruling by reading those selfsame editorials? Please, fellas, relent! How many federal judges will have to be martyred before the *Journal* abandons its bloody campaign?

TELL ME AGAIN how it became so urgent that we dislodge General Noriega. On television the other night administration warlord Elliott Abrams was making vague references to preserving all our options when Senator Chris Dodd—*Chris Dodd!* who led the Democratic opposition to *contra* aid—stepped up to the microphone to declare that this might even mean sending in the Marines. Something dizzy is going on when Elliott Abrams gets out-hawked by Chris Dodd. Everyone's brooding about the "fiasco" of our failure to boot Noriega out, which it surely is. But how on earth did this become a top priority of American foreign policy in the first place? Noriega is no prize, but on any list of the world's least attractive heads of government—measured by job performance, if not complexion—he wouldn't even make the top ten. He's not even on the first string of Latin American human rights abusers. He was running a capitalist economy until we wrecked it, had no imperial designs on neighboring fiefdoms, was more than abiding by the terms of the Panama Canal Treaty, which gives us a substantial military presence in the middle of his country. His role in drug dealing and other corruption was no secret to anyone who cared before this year. So what changed? The forces that set the American policy agenda are always somewhat mysterious, but this seems like an extreme case of random elements combining in unexpectedly combustible ways. Take one grandstanding prosecutor who decides to indict an unprosecutable foreign head of state. Add a seasonal media relapse into drug hysteria. Stir in an assistant secretary of state looking for a cheap Philippines-style triumph with which to restore his tattered reputation. Top it off with Democratic pols happy to use any stick to beat the administration. Add George Bush to taste. *Et voilà*. Nevertheless, it's a mighty peculiar recipe, and in the end the soufflé seems to have fallen anyway.

ARTISTIC AND LITERARY creation is hard, lonely, often underappreciated work. Perhaps it's to be expected that artists sometimes lose their perspective. In these pages recently (May 16), theater critic Robert Brustein seriously compared the "artistic injustice" of a negative review to the burdens of racism and homelessness. In the *New York Times Magazine* on May 29, an essay entitled "Poetic Injustice" complained of the "monstrousness" of America's indifference to poetry, and in particular the failure of a major publisher to keep publishing the author's works. In similar self-righteous terms, artists and writers have been campaigning for a special tax break. I wrote a TRB column on this several months ago ("Book 'Em," September 14 & 21, 1987). Traditionally, artists and writers could deduct all their expenses right away. After the 1986 tax reform, the IRS told them that henceforth they would have to spread their deductions over the years in which any particular project produces income, just like any other business. The artists and writers have two complaints about this, one legitimate and one illegitimate. The legitimate complaint is that the new rules are a paperwork nightmare for people who have no idea when, if ever, a project will pay off. The illegitimate complaint is that artists shouldn't be treated like normal business people. The IRS has now addressed the legitimate gripe, offering artists a simple three-year expense write-off formula. None of the zillion other interest groups put out by tax reform has gotten the government to backtrack at all, so this is quite a triumph. But the artists are still whining—they want the whole rule repealed. What they want, in essence, is a government subsidy through the tax code. Like all such subsidies, the benefit will be in inverse relation to need. (The truly struggling poet in the proverbial garret pays no taxes and doesn't need deductions.) Give them this and who knows what they'll come back for next. Maybe a tax on bad reviews.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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